



THE TRIANGLE
January 12-March 30

CINEMA PROGRAMME

60p

**CINEMA AND IRELAND,
PART TWO**

**ARTHUR PENN AND
STEVE TESICH**

**PETER GREENAWAY AND
"THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S
CONTRACT"**

**MOONLIGHTING
ANOTHER WAY
LE BEAU MARIAGE**



INDEX

ALICE'S RESTAURANT	14, 15
ANOTHER WAY	5
BEAU MARIAGE, LE	8, 9
BONNIE AND CLYDE	14
Book Reviews	29, 30
BREAKING AWAY	19
CAGE AUX FOLLES, LA	31
CHASE, THE	13, 14
CHRISTIANE F	31
Cinema and Ireland (Introduction)	21
DAWN, THE	22
DR. STRANGELOVE	31
DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT, THE	28
ECHOES	31
EXPOSURE	22
FALLS, THE	27
GENTLE GUNMAN, THE	23
GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES	31
GEORGIA'S FRIENDS	20
GIRL CAN'T HELP IT, THE	31
Greenaway, Peter (Introduction)	25
(Short Films)	26
HAMMETT	8, 9
INDIAN STORY, AN	6
INFORMER, THE	22, 23
JANITOR, THE	19, 20
LEFT-HANDED GUN, THE	12
LITTLE BIG MAN	15, 18
LONG GOOD FRIDAY, THE	24
LOVELESS, THE	6
MICKEY ONE	13
MIRACLE WORKER, THE	13
MISE EIRE	24
MISSOURI BREAKS, THE	19
MOMMIE DEAREST	31
MONTEREY POP	31
1941	31
NIGHT MOVES	18, 19
NIGHT OF SAN LORENZO, THE	9, 10
NOT A LOVE STORY	7
ODD MAN OUT	23
OUTSIDER, THE	24
Penn, Arthur (Introduction)	11, 12
PENNIES FROM HEAVEN	31
POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS	31
TWICE, THE	6
PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE	23
QUIET MAN, THE	23, 24
SHOOT THE MOON	31
SIGNORA DI TUTTI, LA	10
Tesich, Steve (Introduction)	12
THEMES AND VARIANTS	18
TIME TO RISE	6
UP IN SMOKE	31
VERTICAL FEATURES REMAKE	26, 27
WALK THROUGH H, A	26

EDITORIAL

In the last edition of the programme I wrote about how the formation of a new arts centre at Aston (now named the Triangle, thanks partly to the University's computer) might affect the future of the cinema. I would now like to thank the many people who responded to that editorial by writing in support of the cinema and its policies. These views have been passed on to the people charged with the responsibility of determining the organisational structure and artistic policies of the new centre. The work of this group is still in progress, and it is not possible to say at the time of writing if the cinema will suffer as I predicted it might. As some people will recall, the two areas of concern had to do with the future of the programme booklet and the level of staffing in the cinema department. Both these issues have yet to be satisfactorily resolved, but it is to be hoped that the strong reaction against the proposed cuts in both areas will ensure that the cinema's activities are not curtailed. In any event, your support has been very much appreciated, and I hope to be in a position to present a fuller account of future plans in the next edition of this programme. (Peter Walsh)

ROBERT VAN ACKEREN

The Arts Lab, with the assistance of the Goethe-Institut, is mounting a brief five-film season of the work of Robert van Ackeren, a young German filmmaker who has worked extensively with directors such as Rosa von Praunheim, Werner Schroeter and Klaus Lemke. The season will take place on Saturdays 22, 29 January and 5, 12 and 19 February, in the afternoons (please see timetable for details).

Van Ackeren's films are distinguished both by his commitment to the examination of the role of women in contemporary bourgeois society and by a deep interest in the relationship of subject to form. A common aesthetic and thematic pattern in his work is the use of banal stories as the basis of the narrative, whose clichés are then filled out and examined in rigorously formalistic but entertaining ways. This is a rare chance to see the work of a very exciting filmmaker. A free booklet on van Ackeren is now available from the Lab. Please ask at the box-office, or contact the Cinema Department if you would like a copy. All films will have English subtitles.

CINEMA AND IRELAND

Our scheduled screening of the film *Shake Hands With the Devil* (March 20) as part of this season has had to be cancelled due to the unavailability of a print. Instead we will be holding a lecture/discussion session on the subject of how Ireland has been represented in British, American and Irish fiction films. One of the speakers will be Rod Stoneman, who has completed a series of programmes on Northern Ireland for Channel Four Television. The sessions will commence at 3.00 p.m. on March 20.

VIDEO LIBRARY

The video library comprises two parts—lending and reference. The lending library is now in operation; the reference part will hopefully start during the next financial year.

The lending library operates from the bookshop and hires out films on VHS format. These films are chosen to reflect the Lab cinema's programming policy (hence no bootlegs of *E.T.*, videos on growing roses, solving the Rubik cube, etc.). The library also makes available for hire films made under the auspices of the Birmingham Film Workshop. The present catalogue thus includes films by local filmmakers Brian Byrne and Yugesh Walia, as well as *Mephisto*, *In the Realm of the Senses*, *Angel and Fitzcarraldo*. A registration fee of £1.00 (£2.50 to non members of the Lab or C.E.F.T.A.) entitles members to hire out films for £1.00 per night, or £2.50 for the three nights Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Needless to say, we hope to build up a really excellent library over the next two years. (Neil Gammie)

NEW FILM CERTIFICATES

U—Universal. Suitable for all ages.

PG—Parental Guidance. Some scenes may be unsuitable for young children.

15—No person under 15 years admitted.

18—No person under 18 years admitted.

CINEMA PRICES

£2.00 (public)

£1.50 (members, students and claimants)

£1.30 (life members)

85p (children under 14 years)

50p (OAPs)

The Triangle acknowledges financial assistance from West Midlands Arts, West Midlands County Council and the University of Aston in Birmingham.

ARTS LAB CINEMA STAFF

Director: Peter Walsh.

Programmer: Marion Doyen.

Assistant: David Hutchison.

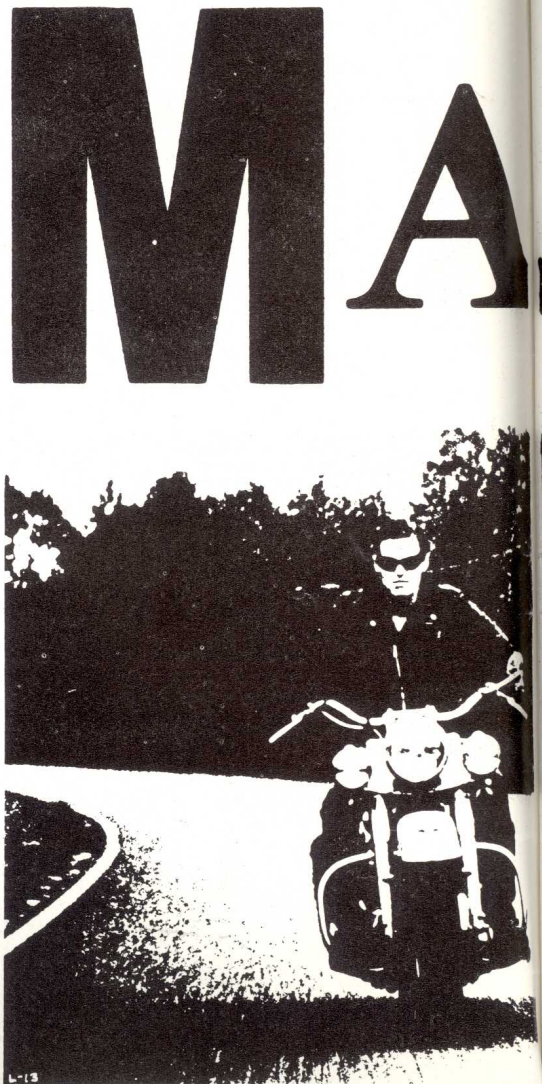
Chief Projectionist: Gerry Gradwell.

Librarian: Neil Gammie.

Birmingham Film Workshop: Roger Shannon (Coordinator).

Cover still: 'The Draughtsman Contract'.

Cover designed by Teoman Irmak.



IN FILMS



THE LOVELESS

MICKEY ONE

THE JANITOR

THE LEFT-HANDED GUN

LE BEAU MARIAGE

THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT

ANOTHER WAY

MOONLIGHTING

(January 20-25)

Director: Jerzy Skolimowski.

Great Britain, 1982.

Script: Jerzy Skolimowski.

Photography: Tony Pierce Roberts.

Music: Stanley Myers.

Leading Players: Jeremy Irons (*Nowak*), Eugene Lipinski (*Banaszak*), Jiri Stanislav (*Wolski*), Eugeniusz Hackiewicz (*Kudaj*), Dorothy Zienciewska (*Lot Airline Girl*), Edward Arthur (*Immigration Officer*).

Colour. Certificate AA. 97 minutes.

Perhaps the first thing to be noted about Jerzy Skolimowski's remarkable new British film is the fact that it's the product of an artist working in exile. Skolimowski has of course made all except one of his recent films outside his native Poland, but his position as a filmmaker in exile assumes a special significance in relation to *Moonlighting* and *Hands Up!* Both these films came to be made as a result of recent events in Poland. It was largely due to the advent of Solidarity, it seems, that *Hands Up!* (first completed in 1967) could be reworked by its maker for a belated festival screening at Cannes in 1981, while it was partly due to the subsequent military clampdown in Poland that Skolimowski found both the inspiration and finance to make *Moonlighting* in Britain.

These connections inevitably suggest a form of direct political engagement, but it is precisely the indirectness of Skolimowski's approach that distinguishes the overall perspective of both films. Thus the significance of much of the new material in the revised version of *Hands Up!*, which contains many shots of Skolimowski in locations outside Poland. As the screening of this film at Cannes proved to many people's apparent disappointment, Skolimowski is not a political artist in any conventional sense. He is a director who favours an oblique and allusive approach, with the result that his best films are invariably difficult to pin down because they operate on more than one level of meaning.

Moonlighting is an intriguing case in point. Like some of Skolimowski's previous films (*Le Départ*, for example), it was produced in great haste yet the final result emerges as a densely structured work which brilliantly combines improvisatory and highly formal elements. The film was rushed into production to ensure topicality, but Skolimowski refuses to confirm that it is necessarily intended to be read as a political allegory. The original idea for the film, says Skolimowski, came as a result of his own experience of living in London. Having bought a house in Kensington, he decided to enlist the help of some friends in Poland to carry out renovations to his home in exchange for showing them the sights of London. Later, in December 1981, the director found himself playing host to a fellow Pole who was stranded in Britain following the declaration of martial law back home.

Skolimowski used these two incidents as a basis for his fictional story about four Poles who come to Britain as illegal temporary workers. What interested him most of all, he says, was the element of deception involved in such an enterprise, and in particular the way in which the leader of the group finds himself developing a policy of duplicity. From this point of view, *Moonlighting* is a film about various forms of deception and the pitfalls of leadership. The four main

characters enter Britain on the pretext of buying a second-hand car, but their real mission is to work clandestinely and earn a year's wages for a month's work. Their employer, in turn, will have his London house decorated for much less money than it would cost to employ British labour. This shadowy figure (played by Skolimowski himself) is a mysterious 'boss' who is only glimpsed at the beginning of the film. Responsibility for the work in London rests mainly with Nowak (Jeremy Irons), who is also the group's only English-speaking member. His task is to make sure that the job is completed on schedule and within the constraints of a tight budget. In order to achieve this he resorts to stealing food from a supermarket and withholding news about events in Poland from his hapless colleagues.

It should be said that the film is not really concerned with the morality of stealing. Skolimowski partly bypasses the issue by making sure we understand the reasons for Nowak's actions through the film's wonderfully detailed presentation of the character's predicament. He has also included other characters in the film who steal, and in each case he elicits our sympathy for the thief. *Pickpocket* has been cited as an influence, and indeed *Moonlighting* shares with Robert Bresson's famous film a fascination with the mechanics of stealing. It might even be argued that, like *Pickpocket*, Skolimowski's film also evokes a spiritual dimension to its protagonist's state which has little to do with orthodox religion. Thus, when Nowak visits the Polish church and goes to confession, he does so not because he is a believer but in an attempt to find his self-respect. He later takes his revenge on a materialist world when he steals not out of need but in order to prove himself by lifting a scarf from an expensive store and bluffing his way past a salesman who is suspicious of him.

Just as important as the shoplifting is Nowak's cheating of his colleagues. As leader of the group, he begins to impose rules and restrictions on the other men as soon as they arrive at the house. At first these merely take the form of strictures about smoking and noise, but they gradually extend to represent a systematic form of cheating and manipulation. It is from these actions that the film's political point begins to take shape, with Nowak's increasingly repressive régime assuming a wider significance in the light of our knowledge of events in Poland. Significantly, though, Skolimowski leaves it to the audience to make its own connections in this regard as he concentrates on the particularities of the situation at hand. Thus the physical work involved in renovating the house is shown in the same kind of detail as the stealing from the supermarket. This may sound boring, but it isn't. Physical actions have always played a particularly important and expressive role in Skolimowski's films. Physical clumsiness has been a feature of many of his protagonists, with the frenzied character played by John Moulder-Brown in *King, Queen, Knave* representing the most extreme case. A more restrained but equally funny example is provided in *Moonlighting* when Nowak's colleagues almost give the game away at the airport by dropping nails and other aids to building work just as their leader is giving an immigration official a false account of why they are visiting Britain. There is also the unexpected moment when the group's second-hand television set breaks down in the middle of a football game and one of the men seems to be expressing his anger as well as continuing

his work when he suddenly takes a hammer to a wall.

Such details make *Moonlighting* a constant joy to watch and listen to, despite the limitations of its settings. Skolimowski constantly surprises us with little details of sound (the voice of Radio Moscow heard coming from a house as Nowak cycles past on one of his missions) and image (the wonderful moment when the camera lingers to catch the 'spontaneous' action of a cat arching its back in fright as it meets a dog on the street). The film is also very funny in its portrayal of the strained encounters between the Poles and the British. One recalls the episode in which Nowak bargains with an Asian shopkeeper over the price of the television set, and the later one in which he tries to 'involve' a salesgirl at a Wrangler shop by showing her a photograph of his Polish girlfriend (who is wearing a Wrangler tee-shirt).

Given its subject, however, one could hardly expect *Moonlighting* to be among Skolimowski's funniest films. The most important fact about its four main characters, after all, is that they are strangers in a foreign country who find themselves cut off from home and loved ones. Skolimowski's treatment of this basic human element makes *Moonlighting* his most deeply-felt and poignant work to date. Two scenes are absolutely crucial in this respect, and in both cases the notions of distance and indirectness I mentioned at the beginning of this review are very much to the fore. The first scene shows Nowak's discovery of military action in Poland, which comes when he sees newsreel film on a bank of television sets in a shop window. Skolimowski emphasises Nowak's distance from these events by showing him watching silent images through a glass window. The sense of desolation and pain is thus intensified through the use of a formal device. More formal still, and indeed one of the few examples in the film of Skolimowski's liking for surrealist imagery, is the scene in which a drunken Nowak longs for the company of his girlfriend. He stares at her photograph, and momentarily her reflected image becomes animated on the screen of the broken television set.

Peter Walsh

ANOTHER WAY (Egymásra Nézve)

(January 27 - February 1)

Director: Károly Makk.

Hungary, 1982.

Script: Erszébet Gálóczi, Károly Makk. Based on the novel *Törvényen belül* by Erszébet Gálóczi.

Photography: Tamás Andor.

Music: László Dés, János Mási.

Leading Players: Jadwiga Jankowska-Cieslak (*Eva Szalanczky*), Grazyna Szapolowska (*Livia*), Jozef Kroner (*Editor*), Gábor Revicsky (*Fiala*).

Colour. English subtitles. Certificate X. 109 minutes.

Another Way is set in Hungary in 1958. The frozen body of a young woman is fished out of the river by patrol guards at the border and is identified as that of a journalist, Eva Szalanczky. The news of Eva's death is broken to her former lover, Livia, who is now lying paralysed in hospital. Livia bitterly remarks that Eva has had the best of it. The rest of the film takes place in flashback and describes the growth of the passionate love affair between Eva and Livia. Eva comes to work on a prestigious national weekly journal and is given a desk in an office with Livia, a colleague who is married to an army officer. Eva, a lesbian,



falls in love with Livia, who initially resists her advances. Problems develop at work for Eva, whose uncompromising honesty compels her to speak out against what she considers to be the dishonest political journalism of her employer, Eva leaves the city and returns to her mother in the country. Livia then acknowledges her love for Eva and goes to join her for an idyll in the country. Livia informs her husband of her decision to leave him, whereupon he shoots her in the neck, crippling her. Eva goes to visit Livia in hospital, only to be rebuffed by her. Desperate, she makes a suicidal run for the border and is shot down by the guards.

Some months ago John McVicar wrote an article in the *New Statesman* about this remarkable film. He argued that *Another Way* is essentially a piece of soft porn—sexist, voyeuristic and exploitative in its representation of lesbians and lesbianism. He suggested that the success of the film among liberal critics and audiences arises from the deliberately-fostered misconception that 'Art Cinema' is somehow 'above' the common criteria of representation that obtain in the commercial cinema ('If it's Art it's OK'). This seems to me to be a perceptive and interesting point. However, as far as *Another Way* is concerned, I think that McVicar is mistaken.

What is at issue in McVicar's argument, as it is in most debates about representations of socially-oppressed groups in cinema, is the question of stereotyping. McVicar (and other critics) asserts that the film fails on two counts. One is that the two women—the plain, dark Eva and the blonde, flirtatious, married Livia—fit the classic lesbian stereotypes of 'butch dyke' and 'feminine femme'. The other is that *Another Way* is yet another story of doomed love—doomed precisely because it is 'unnatural': homosexual love cannot be seen to be fulfilled and happy. The argument goes that stereotypes are reactionary because dominant modes of representation objectify women (in this case); that in *Another Way* both women and narrative are stereotyped; and that the film, therefore, is exploitative

and reactionary.

It's clear that this formula may be applied to many films—'Art' or 'Commercial'—and in many cases will hold true. But there is a problem with the formula which its application to a film like *Another Way* brings to the surface. It's too simplistic and too schematic. The distinction between the film convention (i.e. any device which serves as a sort of shorthand to convey information in plot, narrative and mise-en-scène) and stereotype (the representation or view of people or social groups in terms of one or more specific characteristic, such as colour, sex, race) can be very fine. Furthermore, while there is no doubt that the basis of the stereotype lies in inequality (the assumption of superiority of one social group over another by virtue of 'difference'), the stereotype, which also functions importantly as a means of recognition, can be used as a way of questioning dominant forms of representation. It can work in two ways, as a means of audience identification and as a means of criticising what it purports to describe. I think that the great quality of *Another Way* is that it does both of these things.

Homosexuality is still a taboo subject in the cinema, despite the recent spate of films (*Cruising*, *Making Love*, *Taxi zum Klo*) which have dealt with it as a central theme. It has still been very much presented as a 'problem'. What is so remarkable about this film (and may well be as much as anything owing to the superlatively fine performances of the two actresses who play Eva and Livia) is that lesbianism is presented as *enjoyable*. The suffering involved is much less a result of homosexuality than of the problems of any love affair, particularly one which takes place during a time of political pressure. The film is very clear about the nature of the patriarchal political régime in which Livia and Eva live. It is true that the film presents the two women in—initially, at any rate—simplistic terms, but it is also true that the film suggests that social forces themselves create stereotypes and shape and define the protagonists' lives and sexuality in

very specific ways. It's because of our awareness of this that the conventional Livia's acknowledgement of her love for Eva is so extraordinarily moving, and why Eva's capitulation to the prurient questions of the policeman who is more interested in her sexual life than in her politics is so distressing. The one is a liberation from and the other a defeat by social forces which we, the audience, can recognise. The two women are forced into patterns of being and experience by social forces which will not acknowledge an independent female sexuality, and which seek to contain it by labelling them as 'deviant' or to destroy it and them by ridicule or, as a last resort, by force of arms.

John McVicar's reading of the film is mistaken because it fails to take into account the importance for all women (heterosexual and lesbian) of making lesbianism visible in a non-prurient way. Furthermore, by defining as 'sexist' or otherwise exploitative any representations of female enjoyment of sexuality (naked bodies and all), women are yet again puritanically denied the right to be seen at all.

Marion Doyen

THE LOVELESS

(February 17-22)

Directors: Kathryn Bigelow, Monty Montgomery. U.S.A., 1981.

Script: Kathryn Bigelow, Monty Montgomery.

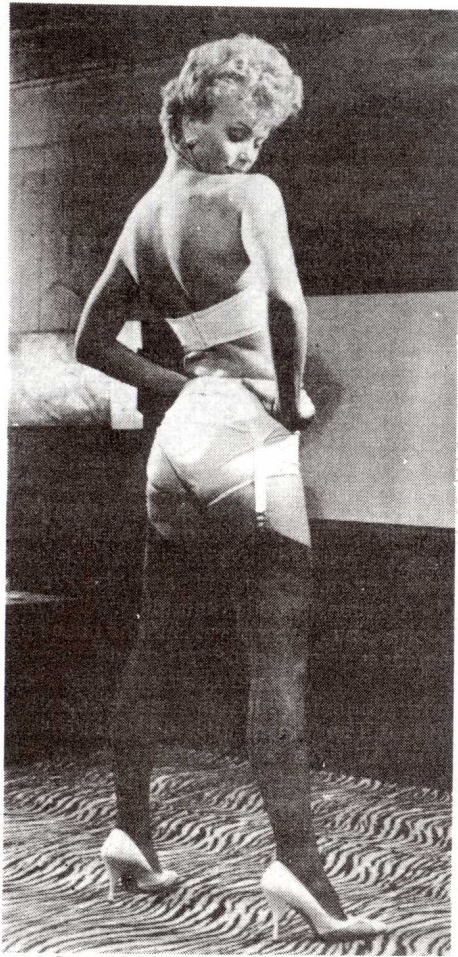
Photography: Doyle Smith.

Music: Robert Gordon, Jack Scott, Dwight Sherman, Marshall Crenshaw.

Leading Players: Willem Dafoe (*Vance*), Robert Gordon (*Davis*), Marin Kanter (*Telena*), J. Don Ferguson (*Tarver*), Tina L'Hotsky (*Sportster Debbie*).

Colour. Certificate X. 82 minutes.

There's a strong echo of Dennis Hopper's marvellous *Out of the Blue* in *The Loveless*, even if it is set in the Fifties rather than in the



post-Elvis, post-punk Eighties. Perhaps it's the tarting-up of its production values that causes the thematic concerns common to both films—youth, alienation, incest—to be much less visible in *The Loveless* than they were in the Hopper film. Bigelow and Montgomery exchange the raw disillusion of *Out of the Blue* for something much more genteelly pleasurable: the self-conscious and playful observation of the generic conventions of the Fifties B-movie, and a tone which verges on the tongue-in-cheek.

The plot of the film is simple but meaty. A group of motorcyclists, most of them ex-convicts, and led by Vance, meet up at a roadside diner in a small town in backwoods Georgia, U.S.A., en route to the races at Daytona, Florida. A member of the group has damaged his bike and so he and his snarlingly resentful companions are forced to wait while the bike is mended. They while away the hours in the diner, in the company of a young, widowed and bored waitress, and in the local garage, where they are watched with varying degrees of fascination, fear and loathing by the redneck residents. A young girl, Debbie, turns up in a flashy sports car, picks up Vance and goes for a drive with him. She tells him that her father gave her the car as a placatory gift after he had driven her mother to suicide. They wind up in bed together at the motel, from which she is dragged by her enraged father while she screams that she's only been doing what he's been doing to her for years. In the evening the group goes to the local roadside bar to drink. Debbie's father plots with his credulous brother to kill the bikers. A fight breaks out in the bar, but before the father can put his plan into action Debbie shoots him dead and then, in front of Vance, shoots herself. The bikers mount their machines and leave town. End of story.

It will be seen that reverberations from other so-called bike-movies of the Fifties fill the screen: most notably from *The Wild Ones*—though also from that classic bike-movie of the Sixties, Hopper's *Easy Rider*. It's these references that distinguish the film's tone and mood so sharply from those

of *Out of the Blue*. *The Loveless* is as much as anything else an exercise in form: what appears on the glossy surface (and plenty does) is what we are given, and very little more. The film devotes passionate attention throughout to the iconography of 50s America, to its colour (pinks and reds clashing together), its music (contemporary 50s rock and roll plus an outstandingly fine score by Robert Gordon), its machinery (shiny black Harley-Davidsons, finned cars, juke-boxes, Coca-Cola vending machines) and its clothes and hairstyles. Everything is carefully placed in accordance with this obsession. Ruth Baumgarten (in an unfairly dismissive *Monthly Film Bulletin* review) observes: "The waitress in the motel with red hair and a pink dress never moves away from the dusky pink wall of the dining room, while the blonde one with the yellow dress stays firmly in front of the yellow wall".

And yet *The Loveless* is not just another visually striking but predictable exercise in Fifties nostalgia. Its interest lies in the sly disingenuity with which it plays with its material and with the audience's expectations. An example: throughout the film the camera lingers sensuously on the popular *objets d'art* of the period, with the Coke dispenser as the apparent symbol of an affluent, bored generation. We become fascinated, like the camera, with the appearance of things, to the exclusion of such mundanities as plot or narrative. We look at the clock shown. Gradually we become aware that the hour shown on the clock has changed. Suddenly the timeless state of hypnosis induced by the camera's attention to detail is ruptured by a device that is itself a time-honoured film convention for moving the plot along. It's this sort of manoeuvre that places *The Loveless*, set in the Fifties, squarely within an Eighties context. It is not a nostalgia film, nor is it a conventional exploitation film, but a curiously detached, visually and aurally entrancing and always entertaining hybrid. It will be interesting to see what Kathryn Bigelow and Monty Montgomery do next.

Marion Doyen

AN INDIAN STORY

(March 3-8)

Director: Tapan K. Bose.
India, 1981.
Producer: Suhasini Mulay.
Photography: Salim Shaikh.
Editor: Prakash Kothare.
Commentary: Naseeruddin Shah.
Colour. 58 minutes. In English.

This remarkable documentary about the blinding of villagers at Bhagalpur in Bihar was recently shown, to great acclaim, at the London Film Festival. The power of *An Indian Story*'s indictment of the legal and judicial system in India was such that the filmmakers were compelled to take their appeal to the High Court in order to rescind



the censors' banning of the film. The director of *An Indian Story*, Tapan K. Bose, has issued the following statement about the film:

"A film like *An Indian Story* will raise many questions in the mind of the viewers. It is not cinema in the traditional sense. It is a celluloid document of what has happened—and is happening—in India today.

"By now, the Bhagalpur blindings story has become an old story. Most of the other stories told in *An Indian Story* are even older. But these stories do not lose their relevance in spite of the shortness of public memory. This is the reality.

"Incidents of suppression of human rights are not uncommon. And protests, therefore, are natural. Our attempt to make a film on the Bhagalpur blindings was our instinctive reaction as communicators. In the process, we discovered a more frightening reality—that protest is inevitably crushed and justice denied, due to the meanderings of well-intentioned bureaucratic processes.

"The blinding of 33 undertrial prisoners had raised a furore in the country. In Bhagalpur, we learnt that the blinding of undertrial prisoners and suspects by the police officers has been going on for several years. It was then that we felt that our film had to go beyond these incidents of blindings to show the conditions in which people of Bhagalpur and Bihar have to live—and suffer. We therefore incorporated several other true-life stories, which show that the suppression of human rights and denial of justice have become an integral part of Indian society today.

"*An Indian Story* does not offer any solution. It has essentially documented the horrendous happenings around us. We found that in spite of living in sub-human conditions, in spite of knowing that their lives are in danger, the people have not been beaten down to submission. This is the other aspect of the reality we have portrayed in *An Indian Story*".

Supporting film on March 3-5: A TIME TO RISE.

Supporting film on March 6-8: PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE.

A TIME TO RISE

(March 3-5)

Directors and Producers: Anand Patwardhan and James Monro.
Canada, 1981.
Colour. 40 minutes. 16 mm.

The following notes are reproduced from publicity notes issued by the film's British distributors, The Other Cinema.

A Time to Rise is a 40-minute colour documentary on the birth of Canada's first farmworker's union. Facing enormous hardships, poorly paid and totally unprotected by labour legislation, farmworkers in British Columbia organised themselves into the Canadian Farmworker's Union on April 6, 1980. Initially the union's membership was drawn from the 10,000 East Indians who constitute the majority of farmworkers in the lower Fraser Valley of B.C. More recently the C.F.U. has been organising Quebecois migrants in the Okanagan Valley of B.C. as well as fighting for the right to unionise in Ontario.

The film documents both the hardships and the struggles of the farmworkers to better their working conditions, as well as the response of the growers to the threat of a union where none had existed before.

Featuring a solidarity visit by Cesar



Chavez, President of the United Farmworkers of America, the film shows the similarity of the farmworkers' struggle throughout North America. It also depicts white and East Indian workers in B.C. making common cause against the racism that inevitably attends upon immigrant and minority-group workers. Finally it shows the C.F.U., despite setbacks, taking a bold step towards a future of dignity and justice for farmworkers.

PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

(March 6-8)

Director: Anand Patwardhan.
India, 1978.
Black and white. 45 minutes. 16 mm.

Made by Anand Patwardhan, co-director of *A Time to Rise* (showing earlier in the week), *Prisoners of Conscience* is a "documentary on political prisoners in India [which] links the fact of their existence to the continuing poverty and injustice prevalent in Indian society. In the context of the aspiration for full democratic rights raised by the defeat of the Emergency in March 1977, the film examines who the prisoners were, the conditions in which they were held, why some of them are still in prison, and what some of them are fighting for". (Notes from *The Other Cinema's* catalogue.)

NOT A LOVE STORY

(March 3-8)

Director: Bonnie Sherr Klein.
Canada, 1981.
Script: Bonnie Sherr Klein.
Photography: Pierre Letarte.
Music: Ginette Bellavance, Sylvia Moscovitz.
Featuring: Bonnie Sherr Klein, Linda Lee Tracey, Mark Stevens, Ed Donnerstein, Kate Millet, Robin Morgan, Susan Griffin, Suze Randall, David Wells.
Colour. Certificate X. 68 minutes.

Not a Love Story is a campaign film against pornography produced by the Women's Studios of the National Film Board of Canada. It takes the form of a guided tour through the sex emporia of New York's 42nd Street peep shows, live sex acts, videotape booths, cinemas and the photographic studios of *Hustler* magazine. This footage is intercut by interviews with those involved in the industry and with some of the groups and individuals who have lobbied against it. Our on-camera guides are the filmmaker, Bonnie Klein, and a stripper, Linda Lee Tracey, whose comic Little Red Riding

Hood act is shown at the beginning of the film.

The viewpoint of the film is unambiguous: the depiction of women in pornography and its increasing use of violence are degrading to all women and both reflect and create hatred and violence to all women. The filmmaker has therefore taken the key decision to include some of the pornographic images she condemns. While this decision led to the banning of the film in large parts of Canada, the British censor, impressed by the moral argument of the film, agreed to give an 'X' certificate, making only one small cut.

"Pornography is the theory: rape is the practice". This reductionist slogan has, over recent years, become the rallying cry of much feminist militancy. Like all slogans, it has brutally simplified a complex and highly emotive subject. The film shares with this position a set of assumptions about pornography that perhaps need to be questioned and submitted to a more rigorous analysis than that of moral outrage. What are the connections between representations of sexuality and sexual activity, between fantasy and enactment? Can one assume that people's sexuality is unified and continuous and that a direct line of transmission exists from pornographic fantasy to violent behaviour?

Pornography does not depict *real* sexual activities but sexual *fantasies*; the film, however, makes the unfortunate confusion between the real and representation. The question then to ask is the relation of the audience to the filmmaker's fantasies—do they confirm, change, disappoint or excite them? What relation does an individual's fantasy have with their other sexual activities? They may be entirely unrelated and departmentalized. Many aspects of the pornographic experience could be seen as separating it off from other sexual experiences.

The role of payment for the transgression of society's so-called moral taboos, the passive voyeuristic relation of viewer to image, and the role of exaggerated sexual stereotypes (stud and nympho), could all play a part in making this experience an autonomous one. To assume, as the film does, that pornographic images have a power to influence behaviour is to assume that *all* spectators and not just those of pornography are susceptible to the colonisation of *any* image. Likewise, the

assumption that all men react in the same way to pornography is to deny the potential of different interpretations, informed by the subjective intrusions of an individual's unique sexual make-up and history and the interesting possibility of unacknowledged sexual ambiguity. There may be a great attraction in male watching male, the old watching the young, the sexually inactive watching the active. Perhaps the male viewer does not put himself in the position of the male actor, but in that of the female, the passive role perhaps offering fantasy release from the strains of phallic performance?

Very few films have been made on pornography, and therefore *Not a Love Story* is a welcome beginning. But it is only a beginning. The debate, if it is to go further, needs to go beyond the film's moral homily, in which the forces of good and evil wage war into the discussion of representation, fantasy and subjectivity.

Susan Barrowclough

Supporting Short:
WATCHING LOOKING (Dir: Caroline Sheldon. G.B., 1980. Colour. 20 mins).

LE BEAU MARIAGE (A Good Marriage)

(March 10-15)

Director: Eric Rohmer.
France, 1982.
Script: Eric Rohmer.
Photography: Bernard Lutic, Romain Winding, Nicolas Brunet.
Music: Ronan Girre, Simon des Innocents.
Leading Players: Béatrice Romand (*Sabine*), André Dussollier (*Edmond*), Féodor Atkine (*Simon*), Huguette Faget (*Mme. Cadot*), Antiqua Dealer, Arielle Dombasle (*Clarisse*).
Colour. English subtitles. Certificate AA. 93 minutes (cut from 97).

Le Beau Mariage, second of Eric Rohmer's 'Comédies et Proverbes', is about a girl who impulsively decides to marry and picks out a suitable mate in the conviction that he finds her equally eligible. Her agonies of humiliation when she discovers that he does not would be unbearably cruel to watch were this not a Rohmer film, as airily enchanting as ever.





It isn't just that as usual he flatters the eye—wonderful shots of the old town of Le Mans that immediately establish its temper, as others of landscapes glimpsed from moving cars and trains contemplate its geographical, cultural and emotional distance from Paris—while the ear is busily occupied listening to his characters as usual working out their tangential problematics in a stream of conversation. He also digs deep enough to demonstrate a foundation, laid by instinct rather than artifice, to the castle in Spain so airily built by Sabine (Béatrice Romand).

Twenty-five years old, completing a thesis in art history and tired of sleeping around, Sabine reluctantly attends a wedding reception. There she is introduced to Edmond (André Dussollier), a 35-year old lawyer, and for a moment there is magic, the sort of suspension of time that isolates two people in a crowded room, interrupted seconds later by a telephone call that summons him away on business. And when they meet later at her insistence, since he is the husband she had already decided she must have, another invisible barrier, this one erected by the all too obvious glint in her eye, is keeping them apart not from other people but from each other.

Yet that moment of eternity, dissolved in an instant, haunts the film until it resurfaces in Edmond's sheepish confession that he *is* attracted, only he is resolved not to marry for the present. Immovable object meeting immovable object, their contradictory resolutions, with each reserving the right to choose, would probably emerge as little more than a convenient aid to intellectual

marivaudage were it not that the impulse behind them is illuminated by a wealth of delicately satirical social observation.

The obvious reference point is Jane Austen, and *Emma* in particular, with Clarisse (Arielle Dombasle)—as Sabine's best friend and Edmond's cousin, the architect of their initial encounter—standing in for the Austen heroine who diverts herself by doing a little match-making but tiresomely gets it all wrong. Clarisse, if that moment of magic which she defines as *le coup de foudre* is to be credited, actually gets it right; and it is left to poor Sabine, tiresomely, to blunder.

Her first mistake, inspired by some perverted imp of women's lib, is that as a thoroughly modern ms, she sees liberation in terms of the leisured grace of the 19th century miss. No accident that she shuttles between the cobbled streets of Le Mans and the busy highways of Paris, since the freedom of choice that proclaims her as belonging to the latter sends her straight back to the confines of the former.

What Sabine is after, as she freely admits to Clarisse—who is distinctly upper as compared to her own middle class—is a spot of social climbing. Not so much out of snobbery as because, tired of being dependent on the whims of married lovers, hating the commerce of the antique shop where she works part time, fed up with settling for posters stuck on the wall to satisfy her aesthetic connoisseurship, she wants to enjoy some gracious living and she wants it now. Her logic is impeccable. Noting that Clarisse is comfortable in her *milieu*, she complains of being uncomfortable in hers. Envyng Clarisse her talent as a painter, she feels her own lack of creativity must be rectified, 'If only by creating a child'. And since Clarisse boasts a suitable husband whom she loves, might it not be reasonable to suppose that some of this bliss might be hers for the asking in the person of the equally suitable Edmond?

Sabine, unfortunately, is in fact supremely comfortable in her *milieu* so long as she is exercising the prerogative of choosing to claw her way out of it. The discomfort comes when she has to meet Edmond suitably on his level, a point succinctly made in the scene where Sabine, mainly to provide an excuse for seeing him again, lures Edmond to a country mansion where he may be able to acquire the item of Jersey porcelain in which

he had expressed casual interest. As aesthete and antiquary, Sabine lovingly admires the piece. Very *grande dame* in her elegant drawing-room, the elderly owner sneers pityingly: 'We used to think of it as shoddy junk'. And Edmond simply smiles. Here—pitilessly signposted by the old lady's aristocratic refusal to budge on price, with her smiling claim that 'Bargaining isn't really my forte' extracting an irrepressibly bourgeois 'Nor mine!' from Sabine—a social abyss begins to loom which is completed by the spectacle of Edmond later uneasily trying to fit himself into the context of Sabine's disco-style birthday party.

Tom Milne

N.B. The above notes on *Le Beau Mariage* have been adapted by Tom Milne from his longer review of the film for a forthcoming issue of *Sight and Sound*.

HAMMETT

(March 17-22)

Director: Wim Wenders.
U.S.A., 1982.

Script: Ross Thomas, Dennis O'Flaherty. Based on the novel by Joe Gores.

Photography: Philip Lathrop, Joseph Biroc.

Music: John Barry.

Leading Players: Frederic Forrest (*Samuel Dashiell Hammett*), Peter Boyle (*Jimmy Ryan*), Marilu Henner (*Kit Conger/Sue Alabama*), Roy Kinnear (*"English" Eddie Hagedorn*), Lydia Lei (*Crystal Ling*), Elisha Cook (*Eli*).

Technicolor. Certificate AA. 97 minutes.

As the start of Wim Wenders' *Hammett* there is what one imagines is intended as an affectionate parody of the conventions of the hard-boiled tradition in American literature and cinema. On a fogbound wharf in San Francisco (obviously a studio set), a private detective and his female associate meet a small-time extortionist in one of those classic yet slightly hackneyed confrontations which invariably conclude the unravelling of some mysterious plot. Then we realize that what we've been watching is a staged version of the final chapter of Dashiell Hammett's latest piece of pulp fiction. We hear the sound of Hammett's typewriter, and Wenders moves his camera in for a close-up shot of the writer typing 'The End'. We are also given innumerable other shots of the typewriter, some of which briefly interrupt the subsequent narrative flow of the film.

Such a device clearly signals that *Hammett* is concerned with the processes involved in the creation of fiction, and one might expect from this some form of critique of the author and the tradition he fostered. What Wenders provides, however, is a validation of both the author and the tradition in question. The circular movement of *Hammett*—beginning at the end of a fiction and then proceeding to outline the basis for a superior version of the same—represents an act of critical retrieval. Wenders' film, one realizes, is not a parody or a pastiche but an intelligent homage to a literary and cinematic tradition.

What one might describe as the film's revisionist strategies come into play soon after the opening sequence, as the same figures begin to reappear in different guises. The private detective turns out to be Jimmy Ryan, who has known Hammett from when they both worked for the Pinkerton detective agency. Ryan shows up at Hammett's apartment and tells the writer that he recognises himself as the model for the detective in Hammett's stories. Ryan's real mission, though, is to seek Hammett's assistance in tracking down a Chinese girl who has gone missing. Hammett is reluctant



to get involved, but he agrees to help after Ryan has pointed out that he saved the writer's life while teaching him the craft of detection. Just before the two men set off on their mission they meet Hammett's neighbour and casual lover, who appeared as the detective's associate in the wharfside sequence.

Needless to say, what follows is far too convoluted even to begin recounting in any detail. But it should be noted that Hammett's search for the Chinese girl is complicated by the loss of his manuscript and the disappearance of Ryan. As he searches for all three, the writer-detective encounters the Chinese underworld, pornographers, blackmailers, corrupt cops and civic dignitaries. Eventually the key protagonists are led back for another deadly encounter at the wharf. The year is 1928, and Hammett begins to transform these experiences into a new fiction.

"I wanted to do a straight detective story about the man who invented the whole genre—and explore the conflict between real life and fiction", Wenders is reported as describing his intentions in making *Hammett*. Yet such a statement can be misleading. *Hammett* is not a biopic, and it probably tells us a great deal more about the process of fiction-making than it does about the 'real life' of Dashiell Hammett. This concern with the creative process is what is most ambitious about the film, and perhaps it also provides the clearest link with the director's previous work. Hammett can be seen as a very American version of the Wenders artist, and one who is less troubled by doubt than his European counterparts in *Wrong Movement* and *Kings of the Road*. He also makes further progress than his predecessors in terms of overcoming the influence of father figures and attaining control of events. Thus Hammett replaces Ryan as the key figure at an early stage in the film, and he ends up exposing the corruption of city businessmen and cops with an ease that is almost embarrassing.

It is impossible, of course, to consider *Hammett* exclusively in terms of Wenders' contribution. This, after all, is a big-budget Hollywood movie produced under the auspices of Francis Coppola, who is said to have controlled the project from beginning to end. Moreover, it is well known that the film had a very long and troubled production history (see the November '82 issue of the *Monthly Film Bulletin* for an excellent account of this remarkable saga). All the more surprising, then, that *Hammett* should emerge as such a tightly constructed and enjoyable movie. Any differences of opinion that existed between producer and director would appear to have been neatly ironed out during the long process of the film's planning, scripting and shooting. Coppola, it seems, wanted a fairly straightforward detective film (complete with high production values, no doubt), and certainly Wenders has succeeded in catering to this demand without abandoning his own particular concerns. As one critic observed, both producer and director would appear to have "got the film they wanted: a cultural detective story and a classical detective story respectively".

Yet *Hammett* has received a mixed response, with some admirers of Wenders' European work expressing disappointment at the film's Hollywood aesthetics and press reviewers tending either to admire or dismiss it for its 'style'. Such reactions are understandable. *Hammett* is a more conventional movie than one might have expected the director of *The American Friend* and *Kings of the Road* to provide on his first Hollywood assignment. The final version (almost two complete versions of *Hammett*

were shot, partly due to circumstances but also because of disagreements over the final section of the story) is almost completely studio-bound, which can only come as a surprise in a Wenders film but not, perhaps, in a Coppola production (especially after *One from the Heart*). The visual style is derived from '40s Hollywood *films noirs*—but unobtrusively so, with muted colour photography instead of black and white (the director's first preference) and with barely a trace of the more striking lighting effects which characterised the dark crime thrillers of the period.

Hammett also lacks the darkness of vision as well as the energy and drive of the best private eye movies and *films noirs*. It is, indeed, one of Wenders' most upbeat and relaxed films. The scenes one recalls with the greatest pleasure are examples of what has been described as the director's contemplative style of filmmaking. The lovely moment, for example, when Hammett—returning home exhausted and clutching a bottle of booze—comes across a group of children playing hide and seek; or the marvellous scene in the library which has glass floors and ceilings, through which we can see a punk quietly stalking Hammett as he follows up a lead.

Peter Walsh

THE NIGHT OF SAN LORENZO (La Notte di San Lorenzo)

(March 24-29)

Directors: Paolo and Vittorio Taviani.
Italy, 1981.

Script: Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, Tonio Guerra.

Photography: Franco Di Giacomo.

Music: Nicola Piovani.

Leading Players: Omero Antonutti (*Galvano Galvani*), Margarita Lozano (*Concetta*), Claudio Bigagli (*Corrado*), Massimo Bonetti (*Nicola*), Norma Martelli (*Ivana*).

Agfa Colour. English subtitles. Certificate A. 107 minutes.

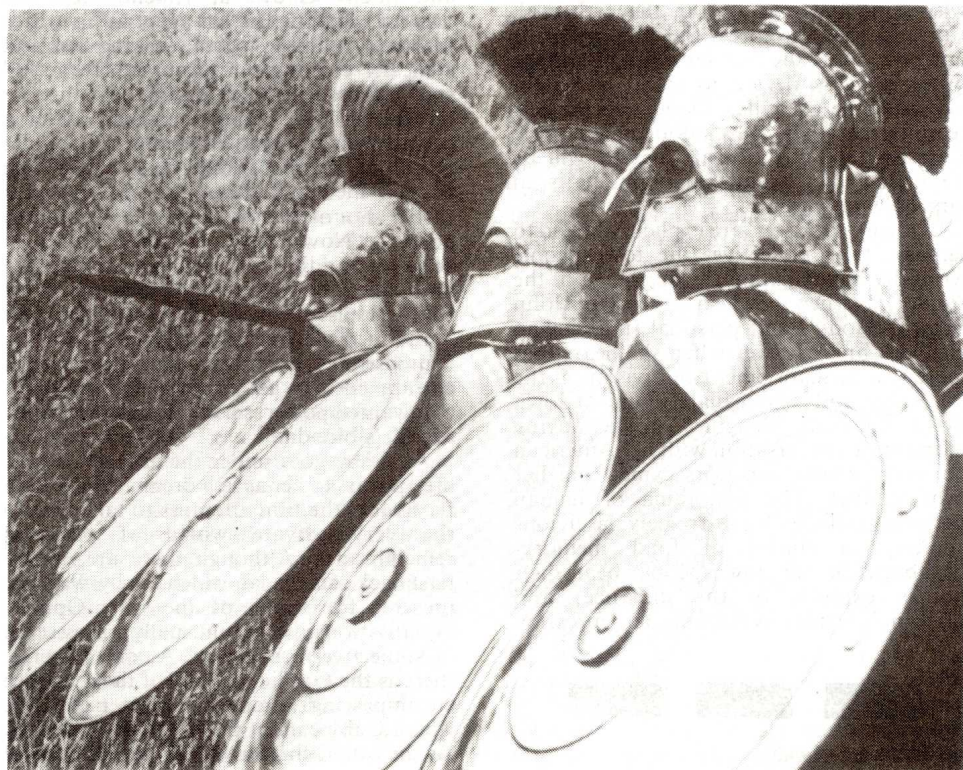
The Italian directors Paolo and Vittorio Taviani won the Grand Prix at the 1977 Cannes Film Festival for *Padre Padrone*. That film's depiction of the powerful and

true story of how a Sardinian peasant boy struggled against the tyranny of his father to learn a language and become a writer stirred audiences world-wide, and was acclaimed by no less a figure than Roberto Rossellini as representing the spirit of Italian neo-realism. The Taviani brothers had in fact made a number of striking films before *Padre Padrone*, of which *Allonsanfàn* is probably the best known in Britain. And as anyone who has seen the latter film will realise, the term neo-realism doesn't adequately describe the kind of cinema which the Tavianis have developed over the years. Even *Padre Padrone* is a highly stylised film, especially in its flamboyant use of music. *The Night of San Lorenzo*, which won a special prize at last year's Cannes festival, is a more subdued affair, but once again the Tavianis do not hesitate to use whatever stylistic device seems best suited to express their ideas.

The film's marvellous opening and closing sequences are set in the present but are designed to evoke a strong sense of wonderment about the past. It is the night of San Lorenzo, when according to Tuscan folklore every shooting star fulfils a wish, and a woman recalls to her infant son another such night during the Second World War when a group of people from the town of San Martino fled through the countryside to escape the Nazis. The mood then changes as the film begins its vivid realisation of this incident, which is not shown exclusively from the point of view of the narrator but as it affects a large group of characters. Chief among these is Galvano Galvani, who is the first to suggest that the townspeople should set out to find the Americans rather than wait in the supposed safety of the cathedral while the Nazis dynamite the town. The film details the experiences of the group as they trek through the Tuscan countryside.

In a review of *La Notte di San Lorenzo* published in the *Monthly Film Bulletin* (December '82), Tony Rayns provided an excellent account of the Taviani's approach to filmmaking. The following notes have been extracted from that review.

"The pretext for *La Notte di San Lorenzo* is storytelling itself: a young mother in the present tells her infant child a story from the past. Cecilia's voice sporadically appears on



LA SIGNORA DI TUTTI

(February 23)

Director: Max Ophüls.

Italy, 1934.

Script: Max Ophüls, Hans Wilhelm, Curt

Alexander. Based on the novel by Salvator Gotta.

Photography: Ubaldo Arata.

Music: Daniele Amfitheatrof.

Leading Players: Isa Miranda (*Gabriella Murge*,

"Gaby Doriot"), Memo Benassi (*Roberto Nanni*),

Tatiana Pavlova (*Alma Nanni*), Federico Benfer

(*Leonardo Nanni*), Nelly Corradi (*Anna*).

Black and white. English subtitles. Certificate A. 89

minutes (cut from 96).

La Signora di Tutti is Max Ophüls' only Italian film, an excursion from the predominantly French films he made after fleeing Germany in 1933. The title comes from a film-within-the-film, a film which is a star vehicle for Gaby Doriot. This ironises the title: not only does it come from a world critically viewed by Ophüls' film, but, by the time Gaby is on film as 'la signora di tutti' (everybody's lady), we have been made fully aware of the cost to her of her apparently highly saleable 'desirability'.

The film's critical view of the film industry is in evidence from the beginning. It opens on a record of Gaby singing 'La Signora di Tutti'. A convention of the popular cinema (beginning a film with a recording of the title song) is here foregrounded in a way which draws attention to the *business* of film-making. *La Signora di Tutti* was Gaby's previous film; her agent is here using a recording of its title song to pressurise the producer of Gaby's current film into paying her more money. The producer resists the pressure, citing, among other things, 'that scandal'. Later in the film (but earlier in time) we witness the attempts of these and other film officials to turn the publicity of 'that scandal' (the death of Leonardo, 'ruined' by Gaby) to Gaby's advantage. If it can, the industry exploits scandal. If it can't, it scores a black mark against the individual concerned and saves itself some money.

At the studio, a search is mounted for Gaby: she is required for shooting. In a series of characteristically elaborate Ophüls tracking shots, we move from the public to the private, as the camera follows searching men through the studio, the dressing rooms and finally Gaby's apartment. Here the camera accompanies her agent as he moves forward, room by room, seeking out and cynically coaxing the presumed 'forgetful' star. He discovers her lying on the bathroom floor: she has attempted suicide. After a frenziedly assembled conference of studio personnel, the first shot of Gaby in the clinic is then mediated through a return to an earlier shot of presses printing her publicity posters. Now their rhythmic pumping acquires additional significance as the mechanical corollary of the beating of her heart. Whilst she lives, the presses continue. An industrial system which simultaneously demonstrates her fame and registers her entrapment (the associations, in the design, of a wanted poster) serves as a metaphor for her life's blood.

As Gaby goes under the gas, 'her whole life appears to her as in a dream'. Here, via a flashback, the film attempts to take us into the very private world of personal remembrance. Although there are, in the flashback, scenes at which Gaby was not present, for much of the time Ophüls' visualisation gives an unusually strong sense of subjective recollection. At one extreme, there is the Gothic imagery of the sequence encompassing Alma's death: a nightmare which Gaby cannot banish from her mind. At the other, there is the repeated motif of

Gaby as a virtually passive onlooker to events. Sometimes this is accompanied by a sense of her helplessness: shut out of the room as her father berates her sister and her aunt about her 'misconduct'; watching Roberto's car drive away into the night. But Ophüls also uses a particular gesture—Gaby sitting, listening and nodding with childlike pleasure—on two very different occasions (as Leonardo narrates the story of the opera; as her agent orchestrates the re-entry of Roberto into her life) in a way which emphasises Gaby as willing spectator. The gesture catches her as a little girl appreciating the way that men conduct and control events, and placing herself outside this process.

In *Lola Montès*—which *La Signora di Tutti* partly anticipates in story and structure—the control by men is elaborated into the spectacle and metaphor of the circus, as Lola is put on display and her story 'narrated' by the ring-master. But, in the flashbacks, Lola shows flashes of spirit and independence: she is not simply a pawn. *La Signora di Tutti* is more problematic in that Gaby, at almost every turn, seems weak, introverted, nervous; a more or less helpless victim of others' passions. Here the little girl image is significant as a statement about her: in a way, the film is *about* a heroine who has been oppressed into a passive helplessness. (Her treatment by her father is, of course, crucially determinant here.) This reading is supported by the characterisation of her sister Anna, who (a) has an energy and vitality strongly contrasting with Gaby's passivity and (b) is rewarded with the happy ending—marriage to Roberto—Gaby had imagined for herself.

The first part of the flashback is a superb dramatisation of the tensions of family melodrama. Shut away from the world by her bullying, military father, Gaby escapes from this oppressive Oedipal situation (the father as tyrant, keeping his daughter to himself) into a whole network of Oedipal relationships centring on the Nanni family of Leonardo, Alma and their son Roberto. The melodramatic thrust of the material climaxes in the sequence of Alma's death, the Gothic 'excess' of which poses a characteristic problem for Anglo-Saxon sensibilities. In his memoirs, Ophüls does in fact suggest that the film is probably 'too sombre, too passionate for non-Italian spectators'. But, independent of the question of 'taste', one should recognise the value of melodrama as a mode of dramatising certain sorts of tension and passion. Alma's death arises out of a whole complex of forces: the use of the opera music (here on the wireless) alone would merit extensive discussion.

Visually, the film is very remarkable indeed. The graceful, elaborate tracks and cranes are indeed characteristic; much less so are the dissolves. The film is filled with dissolves and superimpositions (a visual rendering of 'as in a dream') and, for example, the use of dissolves in the scene when Gaby and Alma meet suggests unusually well Gaby's 'hesitant and nervous' state as she first confronts the potentially forbidding mother-figure. Arguably the most stunning sequence visually is the cross-cutting between the complementary tracks of Gaby in the boat and Leonardo in the car, as they converse whilst travelling parallel with one another. Not content with even this effect, Ophüls breaks the sequence up further, cutting to a track back in front of the car and boat, then returning to the cross-cut tracks, but with the camera at a new angle. It's as if he cannot help exploring the possibilities of the cinema.

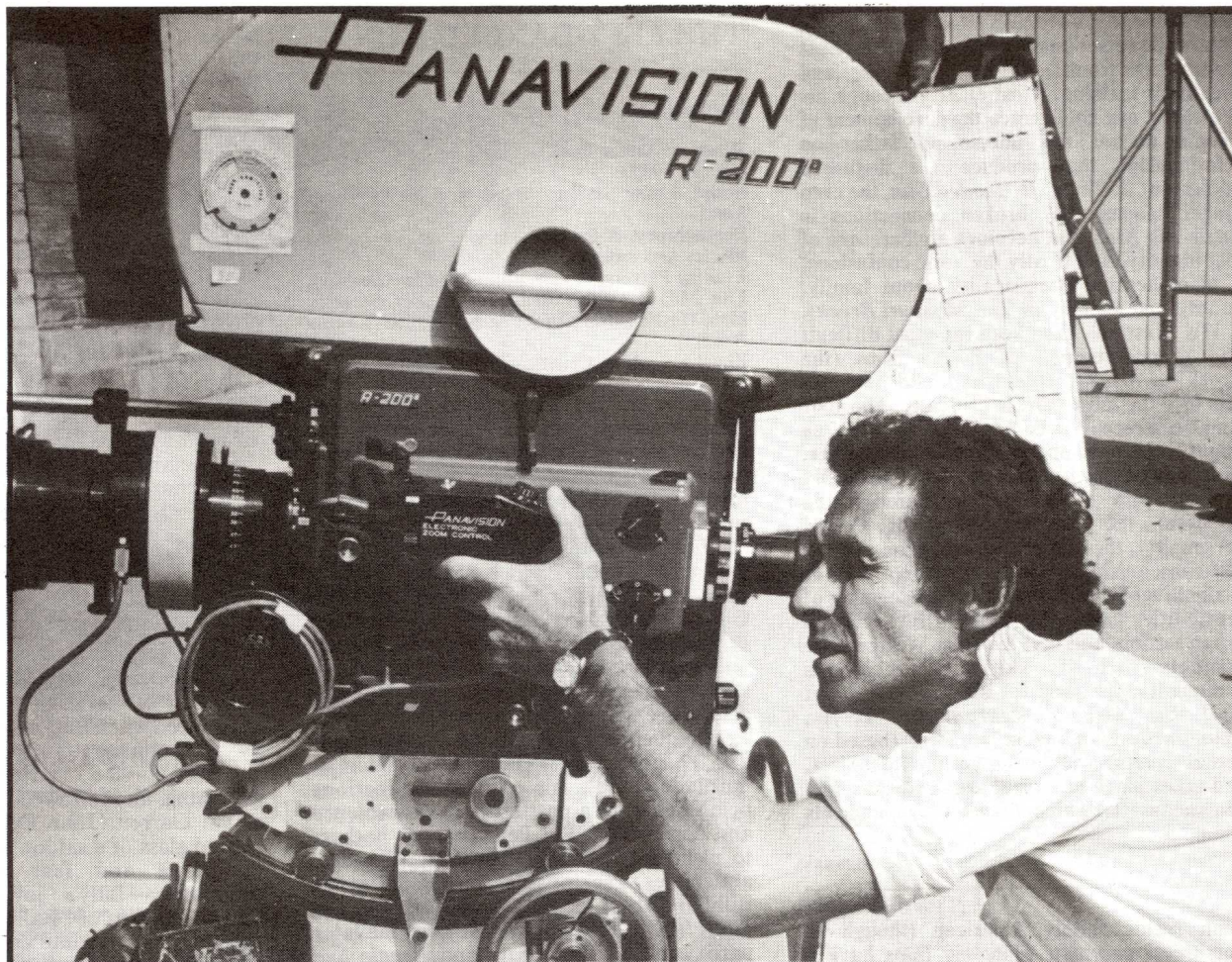
Michael Walker

the soundtrack as the narrator, and some of the fantasy images are clearly designed to evoke the perception of a six-year-old child, inspired by church paintings and stories of Hector and Andromache. But the Taviani push this device no further than it suits them: many of the events in the film are seen from the perspective of other characters, most often Galvano's, and much that transpires is neither witnessed by the child Cecilia nor accessible to the adult Cecilia. Once the story begins to unfold, in other words, is has a momentum of its own and its form is governed by other considerations.

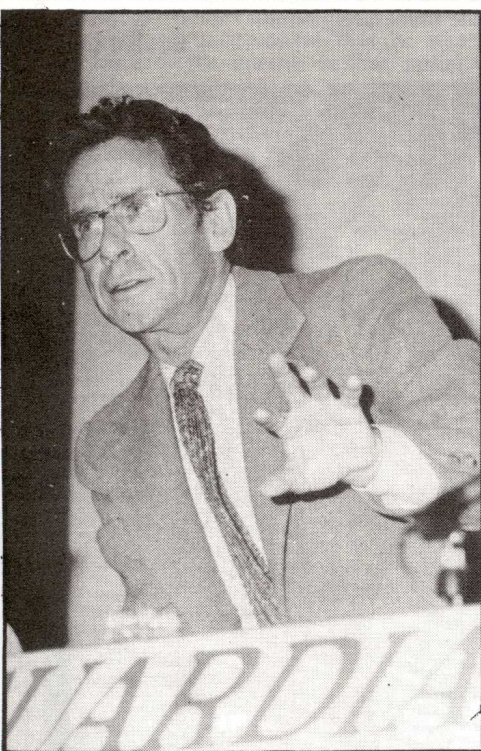
"For the Taviani, it represents another response to their disillusionment with contemporary politics: 'perhaps we cannot understand and overcome the leaden years we're living through now unless we contrast them with the years of sparkling diamonds'. Unlike, say, *Allonsanfàn*, the film makes no direct comment on the confusions and setbacks of the present, but instead celebrates a past in which issues seem clear-cut and ideolog is synonymous with action. Cecilia's story becomes the key to a kind of collective memory of the struggle for the liberation of Tuscany. The scale, finally, is folk-epic; a quintessentially Taviani folk-epic in the vein of *Sotto il segno dello Scorpione*.

"The film's vision integrates some elementary political lessons (it is better to move than to stay put, and better to fight than to run) and a great many stories-within-the story, tales of individual resistance fighters as good sons and daughters of the earth, each designed in its way to subsume sexual and psychological problems into the emotional thrust of the action. A shell explodes off-screen; a pear falls to the ground; Corrado emerges from hiding in a field, strips, washes and hurries off to his wedding with the very pregnant Bellindia. The Taviani's development of the Corrado-Bellindia story is, in fact, typical of their method. After the hasty wedding, clearly prompted less by the priest's prophecies of Judgement Day punishments for living in sin than by simple fears of separation, the couple join Galvano's flight across country. When Bellindia decides to go back to the cathedral, their parting words are a discussion of what they should name their child; Corrado, assuming that it will be a boy, suggests naming it after his father, then momentarily forgets that his father's name was Giovanni. Bellindia accepts the suggestion, without great enthusiasm. After witnessing the massacre in the cathedral, Corrado tries to repress the memory of its horror... until the moment when he and the other refugees decide to stand and fight alongside the guerrillas. Dantè tells the new recruits that they must adopt new names; Corrado radiantly affirms that he will be 'Giovanni' and, from that point, he is an unproblematic figure.

"Other 'blockages' are explicitly linked to fantasy, both collective (the townspeople wishfully hallucinating the approach of the Americans when they hear a record of 'John Brown's Body') and personal (the Sicilian girl who breaks cover when she hears that there is a Sicilian-American division in the 5th Army, and is immediately gunned down by a German, imagines in her dying moments a conversation with her American liberator, whose ancestors came from her own village). The panorama of human passions includes an extremely lascivious adultery, a cluster of fond memory-flashbacks as the townspeople hear their homes explode in the distance, and Galvano's victory over his sexual repression...



ARTHUR PENN AND STEVE TESICH



The gaps in a director's career can usually be put down to ill-luck, bad timing or, increasingly, the sheer laboriousness of putting together packages that will fit an ever narrowing spectrum of 'what the public wants'. With Arthur Penn, those breaks in his filmmaking career both start at the very beginning (five years between his first film, *The Left-Handed Gun*, and his second, *The Miracle Worker*), and have about them an altogether more charged quality, almost a kind of polemical withdrawal or a *reculer pour mieux sauter*. This is not to suggest that they have exactly been a matter of choice—Penn ascribes but will not discuss personal reasons for the five-year hiatus between *Little Big Man* and *Night Moves*. But it seems to be part and parcel of his intellectual cinema that every so often time is needed away from filmmaking—to absorb what is happening elsewhere, to reformulate attitudes. The films that follow each break always seem to be striking at things from a slightly different angle, suggesting that what is important to Penn is less a continuing body of themes than a sensory alertness. Themes may recur, but the excitement of any Penn film usually derives from its particular intellectual texture.

Could one even discuss Penn's career in terms of its 'holes' rather than its themes, a sort of positive-negative thesis? Simply because his absences are not taken up with fixing the small print on bankable packages, or pursuing long-cherished projects, he seems even more absolutely 'not there'. Penn is not 'of' the industry, filmmaking hardly seems to him an essential activity, just a useful tool. The particularity of each film is also a contingency—it is necessary to the time in which it was made, but not to some overriding

need to keep his career going. Penn, one might say, is a filmmaker not by inclination but by subject. Curiously enough, it is difficult to see his in-between career as a theatre director (with plays like *Two for the Seesaw*, *Toys in the Attic* and *Wait Until Dark*) as being as vital as his film work. Rather than being torn between two forms of expression, he seems to find expression in the ambivalence, in being neither one thing absolutely nor the other. It is as if the toing and froing were itself a source of creative energy.

Penn thus comes to embody two distinct kinds of filmmaker: the self-sufficient artist, who won't make a film unless it chimes with some personal ambition, and the craftsman who uses the tools at his disposal without the apparent need to claim complete artistic control, to push the evolution of his own style to the fore. A related contradiction is explored in a *Film Comment* interview by Stuart Byron and Terry Curtis Fox, in relation to the number of times Penn has involved himself with genre subjects: "Yet at the same time he extols craftsmanship, Penn is remarkably resistant to any subservience towards generic elements. All of his projects since *The Miracle Worker* which began as either genre movies or potential light comedies have ended up as depressing, convention-destroying works".

Something in Penn seems inevitably to work against the grain, and it may not be an anti-genre stance so much as the friction he needs to generate in his work, most obviously in the kind of performances he draws out, but also in the rather un-American quality of his particular intellectualism. Penn is one of the few mainstream American directors to try an out-and-out European art movie (*Mickey One*), and the number of times he has taken up

the Western (the American myth which has most fascinated European intellectuals) might otherwise seem anomalous, given his East Coast background, urban upbringing and theatrical training. Most clearly through his Westerns, one could trace the development of Penn's theme: the unresolved father-son relationships that produce the disturbed adolescent of *The Left-Handed Gun*, the even longer sequence of broken connections in *Little Big Man* that becomes a picaresque of lost identity, and finally the antic confusions, a black-hearted whimsicality about family, culture and identity in *The Missouri Breaks*.

His Westerns have been the most difficult and groundbreaking of Penn's films (the 'freak' of *Mickey One* aside), and have run him into the most trouble critically. The poor American reception of *The Left-Handed Gun* might easily have put paid to his movie career, and *The Missouri Breaks* was generally greeted with baffled scorn. Through the Western, the yin and yang of Penn's personality, the archetypal American and the self-consciously European, come into play. It is significant that this most urban-seeming of sensibilities has hardly made a film with an urban setting, and that his most Western-like project (with its shifting, precarious community, its quest for alternatives) might well be *Alice's Restaurant*. It is, simultaneously, his most 'realistic' (based on actual events) and contemporary in subject, and takes place in a rural area (Stockbridge, Massachusetts) which Penn has also made his home.

Penn seems solidly American (though of immigrant parents), while his films have a difficult, glancing, off-centre relationship with the rest of American cinema. Writer Steve Tesich, on the other hand, was himself an immigrant child, but the few films on which he has so far worked (*Breaking Away*, *The Janitor*, *Georgia's Friends*, the upcoming *World According to Garp*) comprehensively and skilfully cover most of the angles in contemporary Hollywood. Appropriately enough, the film on which they worked together, *Georgia's Friends*, is about the process of becoming American, although this represents something different for writer and director. It is reputedly Tesich's most autobiographical film: about the arrival in America of a young Yugoslavian boy, and his introduction to the father he has never known, who left for the New World during the war; about his growth to a native adolescence in the industrial confines of East Chicago, and within the still defiantly immigrant milieu of his family; about his attempt to trade his own background in one fell swoop for the WASP establishment, its termination in a very American melodrama, and his subsequently painful re-orientation and re-immersion in the wider culture. But this sequence, with its deft evocation of period, and humorously exact description of character (Tesich's particular skills, and perhaps another European contribution to the American cinema), is fragmented and set off by a structure which is Penn's most schematic to date. In fact, given the evident autobiographical links in all Tesich's scripts so far (even in the generic context of *The Janitor*), the future test of his work will probably be how far it is able to build in such a sense of structure. The score so far is one fairly indulgent canvas of growing up in the low-income bracket in the Mid-West (*Breaking Away*), one more adventurous foray in marrying this social background to Hitchcockian ambiguities of plot and character (*The Janitor*) and, one assumes, a holding exercise (*Garp*) in which growing up American has become somebody else's altogether more eccentric theme.

Richard Combs

THE LEFT-HANDED GUN

(January 16)

Director: Arthur Penn.

U.S.A., 1957.

Script: Leslie Stevens. Based on a play by Gore Vidal.

Photography: J. Peverell Marley.

Music: Alexander Courage.

Leading Players: Paul Newman (*William Bonney*), Lita Milan (*Celsa*), John Dehner (*Pat Garrett*), Hurd Hatfield (*Moultrie*), James Congdon (*Charlie Boudre*).

Black and white. Certificate A. 102 minutes.

Already in his first film, the split is evident in Penn's work between naturalistic detail—particularly the physical elaboration of the performances—and a more symbolic, metaphorical treatment of theme that will run through all his films, surfacing especially in *Mickey One* and *The Missouri Breaks*. In fact, the only thing which slightly obscures Penn at all in this film, based on a play by Gore Vidal, is the fact that its portrait of Billy the Kid is easily annexed to the 'misunderstood adolescent' school that was such a feature of the 50s, and of young directors emerging from television (cf. John Frankenheimer's *The Young Stranger* and *The Young Savages*). Billy is presented as 'misunderstood', his outlaw inclinations being linked to a past of domestic violence and deprivation. But Penn scarcely bothers to plead a social cause here—nothing that anticipates Peckinpah's interpretation of Billy and the Lincoln County Wars in *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*, or even the later paroxysms of *The Chase* and *Bonnie and Clyde*.

But Billy, it seems, is as much misunderstood by himself as anyone. His problem here is defined as one of 'vision'—something which Penn cogently exploits for its cinematic possibilities—his inability yet to see clearly himself or those around him. He is uninformed more than misunderstood, perhaps, in a way that dramatically sketches what would become a

comic exaggeration in *Little Big Man*—the fatherless child, without guide or model in this phase of impaired moral sight—even down to a curious echoing in the titles, which define their heroes as men with personal characteristics but no person.

The intensity of *The Left-Handed Gun*—the energy which overrides anything that has become dated in the project—largely derives from its theatrical effect, what one assumes is the carryover from Penn's other career, particularly in the vitality of the acting. Paul Newman's Billy is, anyway, defined in terms of overflowing energy, a natural ebullience which (as in the case of Helen Keller in *The Miracle Worker*) needs guidance, and guidance of a firm, fatherly sort. The paternalism of this attitude, even the determinism which implies that everyone is for a while an ectoplasmic being channelled for good or ill by forces outside itself, is linked in Penn's case to an insistence on learning, on a clarity of self and social understanding, which is itself a radicalism. And in *The Left-Handed Gun*, this is expressed in a visual and intellectual imagery which again suggests the fully fledged Penn.

There is the biblical range of reference, the metaphor of "through a glass darkly" first introduced when Billy is being taught to read by the rancher, Tunstall (Colin Keith-Johnston), who befriends him at the beginning, and followed up in our first sight of Pat Garrett (John Dehner) through the frosted glass of a saloon door. There is also the hope and fear implicit in any community—Billy's joyful joining in a pianola version of "Rally-Round the Flag" and then the vigilante descent on the home of Billy's second surrogate father, McSween (John Dierkes), and its levelling by fire (taking us closer to *The Chase*). And there is the presence of Moultrie (Hurd Hatfield), purveyor of dime novel romances about the West, whose leech-like attachment to Billy (an externalisation of Bonnie and Clyde's own fascination with their legend) becomes a case of the opportunistically blind leading the immaturely blind.

Richard Combs





THE MIRACLE WORKER

(January 23)

Director: Arthur Penn.
U.S.A., 1962.

Script: William Gibson. Based on his own play.
Photography: Ernest Caparros.

Music: Laurence Rosenthal.

Leading Players: Anne Bancroft (*Annie Sullivan*),
Patty Duke (*Helen Keller*), Victor Jory (*Captain Keller*), Inga Swenson (*Kate Keller*), Andrew Prine (*James Keller*).

Black and white. Certificate X. 106 minutes.

Even more than *The Left-Handed Gun*, Penn's second film seems to draw on his television and stage background (perhaps inevitably, given that his first film venture had proved so unsuccessful that he was driven back in the interim to that earlier career). In interview, Penn has expressed considerable reservations about *The Miracle Worker* on just that score: "... it was such a finished and sort of tangible piece of material in the sense that it was an existing stage play. Something which I had sort of nurtured a little bit through television and then on to the stage and by then I had pretty much exhausted whatever degree of invention I had toward the material ... I somewhat settled, in the course of the film, for a repetition of some of the aspects of it which had been done in the theatre, which ... no longer served the film's needs, and I think one of the serious shortcomings of the film is that it has an unnecessary reliance upon theatrical devices like, for instance, the lengthy exchanges between Annie Sullivan and Captain Keller, as protagonists and antagonists, in the classic sense".

Penn has also talked about his instinct to work against the smooth-flowing theatricality of the piece by making a "rather abrasive film". But abrasiveness may have led to a heightening rather than a diminishing of theatrical devices, and the result seems most limited by the fact that a 'problem' play has become a 'problem' film, with plenty of scope for bravura acting (both Patty Duke and Anne Bancroft won Oscars for their performances as Helen Keller and her teacher Annie Sullivan), but a very schematic presentation of Helen's 'case'. This is not quite the same as the symbolic presentation Penn has favoured elsewhere (and into which he would rush with a vengeance for his next film, *Mickey One*).

But within these limitations, the teacher-pupil relationship of *The Miracle Worker* is one of the most intense in all Penn's films—an extension into a real world of infirmity, a literal darkness, of Billy the Kid's metaphorical blindness. And where Billy's illiteracy is an obstacle to his growth, the conflict here moves back several stages—taking the actresses, as it were, through further strata of physical performance—to the point where Helen must be made even to understand the concept of language.

Richard Combs

MICKEY ONE

(January 16)

Director: Arthur Penn.
U.S.A., 1964.

Script: Alan Srgal.

Photography: Ghislain Cloquet.

Music: Eddie Sauter.

Leading Players: Warren Beatty (*Mickey*),
Alexandra Stewart (*Jenny*), Hurd Hatfield (*Castle*), Franchot Tone (*Ruby Lapp*).

Black and White. Certificate A. 93 minutes.

Mickey One goes to extremes—Penn's most political film, a metaphor for the McCarthyite nightmare and all the terrors of guilt by association, implication and innuendo, and also his most fragmented, absurdist vision of the loss of identity that burdens all his heroes, the reduction of self to the base of 'one'. Inevitably, this split vision hardly begins to 'work', or rather one is never too sure when *Mickey One*'s existential odyssey in quest of a satisfactory self will not plunge him into some political parable whose terms are equally vague but much more loaded. Stylistically, of course, Penn compounds the problem while remaining commendably true to his own divided inspiration. The film takes in scenes of clearly symbolic import: night-club entertainer Mickey (Warren Beatty) being pursued by a giant, wrecking-yard crane; his stumbling from the fire and chaos of this automotive wasteland to the tentative promise of new life in a revivalist soup kitchen; the oft-heard hymn "Is There Any Word from the Lord?" carrying over to Mickey's on-stage confrontations with the mysterious power behind the spotlight who

embodies his paranoia. But it also includes much Method agonising on Beatty's part as he stumbles through the attempt at an unfrightened relationship with Alexandra Stewart, when the symbolic effigy of Mickey One is presented for sympathy as a real character.

Probably because of its contradictions, its unresolvable tensions, *Mickey One* remains a haunting film, and still one of the most poetic expressions of Penn's interest in the politics of behaviour, the social dimension of an individual groping after self-definition. Although they scarcely appear now in such stark symbolic form, many of the elements of *Mickey One* are firmly embedded in Penn's imagery: the religious revivalism, the hope of a life remade that features in *Alice's Restaurant*; the wrecking yard, and the purgative fire that sweeps through both *The Chase* and *Georgia's Friends*; the testing of personality, the exploration of self that is the real detective game proposed by *Night Moves*. Rather than an experiment that failed, one suspects that *Mickey One* represented just too much undiluted Penn, a probing of the possibilities of his art that he has since learned to keep within more reassuring, naturalistic limits.

Richard Combs

THE CHASE

(January 26)

Director: Arthur Penn.
U.S.A., 1965.

Script: Lillian Hellman. Based on the novel and play by Horton Foote.

Photography: Joseph LaShelle.

Music: John Barry.

Leading Players: Marlon Brando (*Calder*), Jane Fonda (*Anna Reeves*), Robert Redford (*Bubber Reeves*), E. G. Marshall (*Val Rogers*), Angie Dickinson (*Ruby Calder*), Janice Rule (*Emily Stewart*).

Technicolor/Scope. Certificate X. 122 minutes (cut from 133). 16 mm. print.

The Chase is the only one of his films which Penn unreservedly disowns, claiming that it was mauled beyond saving in the editing by producer Sam Spiegel. The film as it stands, however, displays less evidence of this kind of butchery than of a lavishness, a populousness of theme and character, which suggest that more than one set of ambitions may have been operating from the start. There is, in fact, ample room for division, given that the film tackles so many subjects—small-town viciousness, Southern prejudice, capitalist corruption, political violence, personal compromise—and contains within itself diverse movie types. It has been derisively labelled a "South-western" by Pauline Kael, and could be related to the diagrammatic simplicity of an anti-lynch law Western, with Marlon Brando's monolithic sheriff holding out against the scapegoating of an innocent fugitive. The film then crosses this with a pointedly modern parable in which "Bubber" Reeves (Robert Redford) is finally brought in under Brando's protection, only to be shot down on the courthouse steps by an incidental character, an expression of the free-floating violence which Bubber's escape has focused. But this explicit recreation of the shooting of Lee Harvey Oswald by Jack Ruby is a tendentious resolution, invoking an American malady in such a general way than Penn is left open to the charge of having made little of it but melodrama.

The central problem of *The Chase* is one of organisation (which perhaps takes us back to the editing, though there may just have been too much there in the first place), and relates specifically to Brando's Sheriff



Calder. Penn's own statement of his intentions put Calder squarely at the centre of the film: "*The Chase* always struck me as being the story of the existential man as played by Brando, who is in a situation of a kind of emergent riot really, polarization, hysteria, with full recognition of what the aspects . . . of that hysteria were, could make the choice not to act, as being the most formidable action he could take". The trouble is that Calder's sensibility never begins to emerge as an important factor; the drama and the violence very much happen apart from him (until his climactic beating, which unfortunately works back into the Western cliché of the quiet man finally driven beyond endurance, as well as into the ritualistic suffering which had itself become a feature of the Brando persona).

Calder's internal evolution, his own learning process, is nowhere indicated. Which may mean that Penn had always intended him to stand as a yardstick by which the other characters would be measured—making him fully a hero in the Western sense and, in Penn's terms, a character who 'knows himself' in a town where everyone else acts out of variously self-deceived or corrupt motives. Or it may be that the evolution was elided, leaving the film's violence no other context than a kind of potboiling saga of corporate and individual turpitude. In those melodramatic terms, however, it is a sinuous, well-orchestrated apocalypse fantasy, with a fascinating tension between the muscular, contained performances of a starry cast and its visual lushness.

Richard Combs

BONNIE AND CLYDE

(January 26)

Director: Arthur Penn.
U.S.A., 1967.

Script: David Newman, Robert Benton.

Photography: Burnett Guffey.

Music: Charles Strauss.

Leading Players: Warren Beatty (*Clyde Barrow*), Faye Dunaway (*Bonnie Parker*), Michael J. Pollard (*C. W. Moss*), Gene Hackman (*Buck Barrow*), Estelle Parsons (*Blanche*).

Technicolor. Certificate X. 111 minutes.

Although *Little Big Man* stands at No. 11 position in the *Anatomy of the Movies* list of

top-grossing Westerns, Penn's greatest commercial success, and the film that most identifies him in the public mind, remains *Bonnie and Clyde*. In critical terms, this means that there has been an inevitable reaction against the film, a denigration of it in terms of a certain chic, its awarding a Hollywood seal of approval to the thesis of social banditry, and an eagerness to see in Roger Corman's subsequent *Bloody Mama* a psychopathology of violence that is an "annihilation" of Penn's 'beautiful people' treatment of the subject (Edinburgh Film Festival booklet on Corman). Penn's treatment is "folksy", with lots of soundtrack jollification of the couple's early exploits before we, and they, are slapped in the face with the repercussions of this behaviour: "Penn lives vicariously on the zealous criminality of his heroes and then points out that they are, after all, immoral" (Edinburgh again).

Some defence has been made against the charges of glamorisation and moral hypocrisy, either by asserting Penn's self-conscious use of the glamour (Bonnie and Clyde are played by Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty because that's how the real Bonnie and Clyde would have visualised themselves) or by seeing the film as an endorsement of the growing integrity of the couple against the forces of conventional morality. The 'slap in the face' aspect has also been advanced as the film's greatest trump, not as a way of castigating the mayhem it has just been enjoying, but again self-consciously of allowing the entertaining features of the story to precede the psychopathology of the couple. All these arguments touch the film plausibly at certain points, although its central difficulty is that it remains a careful intellectual construction, treading a line as it were between the polarised but equally chastening experiences of *Mickey One* and *The Chase*. Only by the accident of its being chosen as a watershed movie by *Time* and *Newsweek* did it find itself turned into a bandwagon.

Where Corman takes the dynamics of the Ma Baker gang as his normality, Penn never for a moment allows the sensibility of his couple to dominate *Bonnie and Clyde*. The film is in many ways a return to the basics of *The Left-Handed Gun*, a study of immaturity, of an adolescent couple who have learned to assert themselves through violence before they have begun to know themselves. The sequence of father figures

through whom Billy tries to find his way is replaced here by a more general theme of homelessness. Bonnie and Clyde are not excused by reference to social deprivation and injustice, and then condemned in a last-scene cop-out to 'crime doesn't pay'. They define themselves by invoking that injustice ("We rob banks") as Clyde proudly boasts to the farmer who has just been dispossessed by one), but lose themselves in the process, looking for external confirmation of an elusive internal reality (Bonnie's restlessness, Clyde's impotence).

Penn is in fact scrupulous about not pleading a social cause for his couple: the emblematic opening establishes simply Bonnie's small-town boredom and Clyde's thirst for adventure (the gun that serves as a phallus). But their togetherness remains a chimera—like the 'impossible' evocation of an idyllic picnic scene with Bonnie's family just before the end—until public recognition gives Clyde the identity that he needs, along with a more lethal attention. The world of *Bloody Mama* is constructed entirely from within, that of *Bonnie and Clyde* from without, from the myths ("We're in the money") and materials to hand in a despoiled landscape. It may not be the bleakest of Penn's films, but its poetry and lyricism intersect with a cruel sense of loss and inadequacy.

Richard Combs

ALICE'S RESTAURANT

(January 30)

Director: Arthur Penn.
U.S.A., 1969.

Script: Venable Herndon, Arthur Penn. Based on the song *The Alice's Restaurant Massacre* by Arlo Guthrie.

Photography: Michael Nebbia.

Music/Songs: Arlo Guthrie.

Leading Players: Arlo Guthrie (*Arlo*), Pat Quinn (*Alice*), James Broderick (*Ray*), Michael McClanathan (*Shelly*), Geoff Outlaw (*Roger*).

De Luxe Colour. Certificate X. 110 minutes.

Alice's Restaurant is, in many senses, Penn's home movie. The events it describes took place in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, which has become his home-away-from-New York, and after *The Chase* and *Bonnie and Clyde* his way of filming it was very different. "I decided not to be bothering with the big studios again. I hate Hollywood and big stars; so now this is my own picture . . . I get the money from United Artists, but they don't involve themselves at all". The result is another variation on the Penn dialectic of naturalism and symbolism, of spontaneous performance and intellectual frame. One aspect of *Alice's Restaurant* is its documentary on a particular experience of the hippy/peace movement of the 60s; extracted from this is an account of rebels in search not so much of a cause as a home, an American odyssey as archetypal as anything in Penn. In fact, until *Georgia's Friends*, it has claim to being his most Fordian picture.

The immediate basis of the film was an event that had already been turned into art: the nineteen-minute song composed by Arlo Guthrie, son of the legendary Woody, about his arrest for illegal disposal of some garbage from a Thanksgiving celebration, and how this criminal record later saved him from the Vietnam draft. As he declares to his inquisitors: "You wanna know if I'm moral enough to join the army, burn women, kids, houses and villages after being a litter bug?" The Thanksgiving had been celebrated in a deconsecrated church in Stockbridge, which a couple, Alice and Ray Brock, had turned into a shelter for anyone who needed to drop out and do their own thing—a concrete



attempt to realise the hippy utopia. What the film explores, with actors (Pat Quinn, James Broderick) for Alice and Ray, and some of the actual participants (like Officer William Obanhein and blind Judge James Hannon) from Arlo's case, is the consequences when the dream is unable to contain the forces of free expression it has let loose.

Such a description, however, makes the film sound more apocalyptic than it is. Penn has not set out to denounce the hippy myth but to come to terms with its contradictions. Alice and Ray are prime Penn parent figures, who in the end can provide a home no more stable than their own fragile humanity (Alice's infidelities in the cause of peace and love put too great a strain on their marriage; Ray dreams a new dream, replacing the church with a farm), and the film ends, though not unhelpfully, on a note of piercing regret. For Arlo, at least, moving on seems an inevitability, his stay at the church having been preceded by an encounter with a revivalist prayer meeting, causing him to muse, "Seems like Woody's road might have run through here sometime". Woody, of course, is the other 'real' father figure impersonated here, one who has passed on to his son not only a musical gift but possibly a fatal nervous disorder. This latter piece of information is relayed comically in the draft-board sequence—and becomes a lighter kind of irony in *Georgia's Friends*, where one of the four anticipates with dread his paternal inheritance of fatness, baldness and undertaking.

Richard Combs

LITTLE BIG MAN

(February 2)

Director: Arthur Penn.

U.S.A., 1970.

Script: Calder Willingham. Based on the novel by Thomas Berger.

Photography: Harry Stradling Jr.

Music: John Hammond, John Strauss.

Leading Players: Dustin Hoffman (*Jack Crabb*), Faye Dunaway (*Mrs. Pendrake*), Martin Balsam (*Allardye T. Merriweather*), Richard Mulligan (*General George A. Custer*), Chief Dan George (*Old Lodge Skins*), Jeff Corey (*Wild Bill Hickok*). Technicolor/Scope. Certificate AA. 139 minutes (cut from 147).

A lot of ground is covered in the yarn spun by Thomas Berger's 121-year-old *Little Big Man*, a teeming canvas of characters and events that may or not make up the history of a continent. But the most striking thing about the epic Penn has taken from this source is that it is not. His film does not teem: his vision of the settling of the West seems far less crowded than what happens in one Texan town in *The Chase*, and his recreation of the two cultures that contest the territory—white and Indian—serves principally to demonstrate his hero's lack of place in either. Penn and screenwriter Calder Willingham have kept the framing context of the impossibly old man who must be either his country's greatest unsung hero or its greatest liar. But what in Berger is a literary jest, an exaltation of the 'history' of his narrator over the history that he pretends to be giving us, here becomes a more existential paradox: that a century-long personal chronicle can turn on a figure whose very person is in question.

More comprehensively than in *Bonnie and Clyde*, because in more diagrammatic, exaggerated, mock-heroic terms, Penn recreates a past culture in order to quiz the cultural basis of identity, its elements of choice and conditioning. This is at once his most artificial narrative—it does teem, at least, with father figures, between which

C I N E M A

JANUARY

Thu. 13	THE ATOMIC CAFE (15) & Short	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Fri. 14	DR. STRANGELOVE (PG) THE ATOMIC CAFE (15) & Short	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sat. 15	DR. STRANGELOVE (PG) THE ATOMIC CAFE (15) & Short	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sun. 16	Penn: MICKEY ONE (PG) & THE LEFT-HANDED GUN (PG) THE ATOMIC CAFE (15) & Short	2.30 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Mon. 17	THE ATOMIC CAFE (15) & Short	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Tue. 18	THE ATOMIC CAFE (15) & Short	2.30, 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Wed. 19	1941 (PG) Cinema & Ireland: THE DAWN & EXPOSURE (Club)	3.00 p.m. 7.30 p.m.
Thu. 20	MOONLIGHTING (15)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Fri. 21	1941 (PG) MOONLIGHTING (15)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sat. 22	Van Ackeren: DER LETZTE SCHREI (Club) MOONLIGHTING (15) 1941 (PG)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m. 11.00 p.m.
Sun. 23	Penn: THE MIRACLE WORKER (18) MOONLIGHTING (15)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Mon. 24	MOONLIGHTING (15)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Tue. 25	MOONLIGHTING (15)	2.30, 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Wed. 26	NATIONAL LAMPOON'S ANIMAL HOUSE (15) & UP IN SMOKE (18) Penn: BONNIE & CLYDE (18) & THE CHASE (18)	2.30 p.m. 6.30 p.m.
Thu. 27	ANOTHER WAY (18)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Fri. 28	NATIONAL LAMPOON'S ANIMAL HOUSE (15) & UP IN SMOKE (18) ANOTHER WAY (18)	2.30 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sat. 29	Van Ackeren: HARLIS (Club) ANOTHER WAY (18) NATIONAL LAMPOON'S ANIMAL HOUSE (15) & UP IN SMOKE (18)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m. 11.00 p.m.
Sun. 30	Penn: ALICE'S RESTAURANT (18) ANOTHER WAY (18)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Mon. 31	ANOTHER WAY (18)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

FEBRUARY

Tue. 1	ANOTHER WAY (18)	2.30, 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Wed. 2	SHOOT THE MOON (15) Penn: LITTLE BIG MAN (15) (Unconfirmed)	3.00 p.m. 7.30 p.m.
Thu. 3	Greenaway: THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT (15)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Fri. 4	SHOOT THE MOON (15) Greenaway: THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT (15)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sat. 5	Van Ackeren: BELCANTO (Club) Greenaway: THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT (15) SHOOT THE MOON (15)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m. 11.00 p.m.
Sun. 6	Penn: NIGHT MOVES (18) & THEMES AND VARIANTS Greenaway: THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT (15)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Mon. 7	Greenaway: THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT (15)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Tue. 8	Greenaway: THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT (15)	2.30, 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Wed. 9	PENNIES FROM HEAVEN (15) Cinema & Ireland: ODD MAN OUT (PG) & 'THE INFORMER' (PG)	3.00 p.m. 7.00 p.m.
Thu. 10	Greenaway: THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT (15)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Fri. 11	PENNIES FROM HEAVEN (15) Greenaway: THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT (15)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sat. 12	Van Ackeren: DAS ANDERE LAECHELN (Club) Greenaway: THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT (15) PENNIES FROM HEAVEN (15)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m. 11.00 p.m.
Sun. 13	Penn: THE MISSOURI BREAKS (15) Greenaway: THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT (15)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Mon. 14	Greenaway: THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT (15)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Tue. 15	Greenaway: THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT (15)	2.30, 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Wed. 16	MONTEREY POP (PG) & ECHOES Greenaway: THE FALLS (Club)	3.00 p.m. 7.15 p.m.
Thu. 17	THE LOVELESS (18) & Short	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Fri. 18	MONTEREY POP (PG) & ECHOES THE LOVELESS (18) & Short	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sat. 19	Van Ackeren: DIE REINHEIT DES HERZENS (Club) THE LOVELESS (18) & Short MONTEREY POP (PG) & ECHOES	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m. 11.00 p.m.
Sun. 20	Cinema & Ireland: THE GENTLE GUNMAN (PG) THE LOVELESS (18) & Short	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Mon. 21	THE LOVELESS (18) & Short	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Tue. 22	THE LOVELESS (18) & Short	2.30, 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Wed. 23	LA CAGE AUX FOLLES (15) LA SIGNORA DI TUTTI (PG)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

C A L E N D A R

Thu. 24	Penn/Tesich: GEORGIA'S FRIENDS (15)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Fri. 25	LA CAGE AUX FOLLES (15) Penn/Tesich: GEORGIA'S FRIENDS (15)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sat. 26	LA CAGE AUX FOLLES (15) Penn/Tesich: GEORGIA'S FRIENDS (15)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sun. 27	LA CAGE AUX FOLLES (15) Tesich: THE JANITOR (15) & BREAKING AWAY (15)	3.00 p.m. 7.00 p.m.
Mon. 28	Tesich: THE JANITOR (15) & BREAKING AWAY (15)	7.00 p.m.

MARCH

Tue. 1	Tesich: THE JANITOR (15) & BREAKING AWAY (15)	2.30 & 7.00 p.m.
Wed. 2	CHRISTIANE F (18) Tesich: THE JANITOR (15) & BREAKING AWAY (15)	3.00 p.m. 7.00 p.m.
Thu. 3	AN INDIAN STORY (PG) & A TIME TO RISE (PG) NOT A LOVE STORY (18) & Short	6.15 p.m. 8.30 p.m.
Fri. 4	CHRISTIANE F (18) AN INDIAN STORY (PG) & A TIME TO RISE (PG) NOT A LOVE STORY (18) & Short	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 p.m. 8.30 p.m.
Sat. 5	CHRISTIANE F (18) AN INDIAN STORY (PG) & A TIME TO RISE (PG) NOT A LOVE STORY (18) & Short	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 p.m. 8.30 p.m.
Sun. 6	Cinema & Ireland: THE QUIET MAN (PG) AN INDIAN STORY (PG) & PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE (PG) NOT A LOVE STORY (18) & Short	3.00 p.m. 6.15 p.m. 8.30 p.m.
Mon. 7	AN INDIAN STORY (PG) & PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE (PG) NOT A LOVE STORY (18) & Short	6.15 p.m. 8.30 p.m.
Tue. 8	AN INDIAN STORY (PG) & PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE (PG) NOT A LOVE STORY (18) & Short	2.30 & 6.15 p.m. 8.30 p.m.
Wed. 9	THE GIRL CAN'T HELP IT (PG) & GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES (U) Cinema & Ireland: THE RISING OF THE MOON & MISE EIRE (Club)	2.30 p.m. 7.00 p.m.
Thu. 10	LE BEAU MARIAGE (15)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Fri. 11	THE GIRL CAN'T HELP IT (PG) & GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES (U) LE BEAU MARIAGE (15)	2.30 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sat. 12	THE GIRL CAN'T HELP IT (PG) & GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES (U) LE BEAU MARIAGE (15)	2.30 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sun. 13	THE GIRL CAN'T HELP IT (PG) & GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES (U) LE BEAU MARIAGE (15)	2.30 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Mon. 14	LE BEAU MARIAGE (15)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Tue. 15	LE BEAU MARIAGE (15)	2.30, 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Wed. 16	THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE (18) Greenaway: SHORT FILMS (Club)	3.00 p.m. 7.00 p.m.
Thu. 17	HAMMETT (15)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Fri. 18	THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE (18) HAMMETT (15)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sat. 19	THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE (18) HAMMETT (15)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sun. 20	Cinema & Ireland: SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DEVIL (PG) (Unconfirmed) HAMMETT (15)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Mon. 21	HAMMETT (15)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Tue. 22	HAMMETT (15)	2.30, 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Wed. 23	Cinema & Ireland: THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY (18) Cinema & Ireland: THE OUTSIDER (15)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Thu. 24	THE NIGHT OF SAN LORENZO (PG)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Fri. 25	Cinema & Ireland: THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY (18) THE NIGHT OF SAN LORENZO (PG)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sat. 26	Cinema & Ireland: THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY (18) THE NIGHT OF SAN LORENZO (PG)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sun. 27	THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY (18) THE NIGHT OF SAN LORENZO (PG)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Mon. 28	THE NIGHT OF SAN LORENZO (PG)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Tue. 29	THE NIGHT OF SAN LORENZO (PG)	2.30, 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Wed. 30	MOMMIE DEAREST (15) Greenaway: A WALK THROUGH H & VERTICAL FEATURES REMAKE (Club)	3.00 p.m. 7.00 p.m.

PLEASE NOTE: (1) Screenings for the unemployed will continue on Tuesday afternoons. Owing to the variable running times of films, certain screenings will start at 2.00 p.m. rather than the usual 2.30 p.m. Please check the calendar for details. (2) With double-bill programmes the main film (listed first) will be shown after the support film (listed second).

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Jack Crabb (Dustin Hoffman) shuttles like a perpetual founding—and his most rooted in the detail, the ‘reality’ of an actor and his performance. Hoffman’s persona as the ill-at-ease innocent is explored through innumerable learning sequences—learning to be an Indian, a gunfighter, a patent medicine pedlar, etc.—in which the lesson fails to take. The way the West has come down to us in myth (Wild Bill Hickok, General Custer, etc.) remains beyond the grasp of a character who exists only in his fumbings, in his way of responding passively to a situation, but whose sense of identity fails to solidify into any such stereotype. Stereotypes, at least, in terms of the white characters—idiotic cut-outs that pass in fragmentary succession through Jack’s life, icons of a disconnected, centreless civilisation. By contrast, the film’s view of the Cheyenne is crystallised in the image of a circle, explained to Jack by Old Lodge Skins (Chief Dan George), the closest he comes to a ‘real’ father, as the image of life’s wholeness. But the Cheyenne way is passing—this, of course, is sentimentally part of its perfection—and Jack remains at the end, like any Penn hero, a man unresolved, a pilgrim.

Richard Combs

N.B. Our scheduled screening of this film remains unconfirmed at the time of going to press.

ARTHUR PENN, 1922—: THEMES AND VARIANTS

(February 6)

Director: Robert Hughes.
U.S.A., 1970.

Script: Robert Hughes.

Photography: Paul Goldsmith, Robert Fiore.

Featuring: Arthur Penn, Dede Allen, Anne Bancroft, Warren Beatty, Alice Brock, Ray Brock, William and Margaret Brenman Gibson, Arlo Guthrie, Dustin Hoffman, Peggy, Matthew and Molly Penn.

Colour. 86 minutes. 16 mm.

‘An excellent ninety-minute essay on Arthur Penn, remarkable for the lack of cliché in its documentary method. The themes and variants revealed provide a flexible structure

for what appears a rather loose and informal organisation of a great variety of material. In a series of interviews, Penn discusses and interprets his work, the problems of production and his methods of working, and some of the obvious parallels between his films and his own life. Excerpts from all his films illustrate these observations; friends add their own comments; and Penn in turn watches and reacts to these brief interviews. These verbal revelations are complemented by sequences showing Penn at work on location for *Little Big Man* and glimpses of his home life—reading Mark Twain’s ribald tale *1601* to his family, continuing the film’s discussions with his wife, and conducting a short tour of his home town of Stockbridge in the context of its starring role in *Alice’s Restaurant*. The most attractive quality of Robert Hughes’ production is its flexible combination of personal insight and critical analysis. The static quality and stumbling development of the usual interview is avoided, both by the device of keeping the interviewer out of frame and excluding his questions entirely, and by the appositeness of the clips from Penn’s films that are cut in to illustrate his remarks. Hughes begins by connecting some ironic comments by Penn on his status as a film-maker with sequences depicting the preoccupation with the relationship between man and myth that particularly characterised *The Left-Handed Gun* and *Bonnie and Clyde*, and with a résumé of the career of Penn’s brother Irving, who achieved fame with his photographic portraits of famous contemporaries. The later discussions are neatly balanced between Penn’s explanation of his gradual involvement in and exploration of the medium (from the moment of shock when he first realised the discrepancy between what is seen and heard on film as opposed to the stage) and his examination of the personal preoccupations that have “washed into” his films. To illustrate his methods of working, Penn contrasts the instinctive, emotional choices that led him to show Billy in exuberant celebration after the funeral of his friend in *Left-Handed Gun* with the deliberate, intellectual decision that prompted the creation of a number of father figures in the same film. Most successful of all is the way the interviews are edited together (with changes in setting providing a certain visual

variety) to follow Penn in his examination of his recurring themes: *Little Big Man* is summed up as “an identity crisis in two cultures”; *Mickey One* is the story of a generation “mute, locked up in itself and in its flight from its own identity”. And Hughes’ method is neatly justified towards the end of the film when, discussing Bergman’s *Wild Strawberries* with his wife, Penn talks of the universal need to “revisit . . . these experiences of self-definition”.
Richard Combs/*Monthly Film Bulletin* (May, 1971)

NIGHT MOVES

(February 6)

Director: Arthur Penn.

U.S.A., 1975.

Script: Alan Sharp.

Photography: Bruce Surtees.

Music: Michael Small.

Leading Players: Gene Hackman (*Harry Moseby*), Jennifer Warren (*Paula*), Edward Binns (*Joey Zigler*), Harris Yulin (*Marty Heller*), Kenneth Mars (*Nick*).

Technicolor. Certificate X. 99 minutes.

The private-eye mystery, one would think, is such an appropriate form for the theme of any Penn film—the identity puzzle—that it is curious he has been drawn less to this genre than, say, to the Western. The latter, perhaps, can contain the theme more easily—even more expansively in the case of *Little Big Man*—where Penn’s detective movies (there are only two even by stretching the definition to include *Mickey One*) seem more tensely, problematically intellectual. To heighten the sense of peculiarity about *Night Moves* is the fact that it is based on an original script by Alan Sharp—a non-American to complement, as it were, Penn’s un-Americanism—whose most noticeable script work previously had been two Westerns, *Ulzana’s Raid* and *Billy Two Hats*. But in 1975, when the American cinema had just about given up on the Western—was it waiting for the *coup de grâce* of *Heaven’s Gate*?—and the great exhumation of the private eye had just begun, *Night Moves* at least had fashion on its side where *Mickey One* had been a lonely aberration. And in the event it has proved one of Penn’s best films, and one of the most resonant in a crowded cycle still going strong, from *The Long Goodbye* to *Dead Men Don’t Wear Plaid*.

Two things should immediately be noted about Penn’s treatment of the myth. His gumshoe, Harry Moseby (Gene Hackman), is a man of the present, not the ‘40s recreated (*Chinatown*) or updated (*The Long Goodbye*). And Moseby’s own mystery is essential to what the film is about. He is not a catalyst who will become (as, for different reasons, do both the Polanski and Altman heroes) a helpless victim. To be sure, he suffers as much—perhaps even more, left at the end, seriously, perhaps even mortally, wounded aboard a boat drifting in circles—as they do. Here, as elsewhere in the genre, the evil he tackles proves greater than even his cynical profession has prepared him for; the times are too corrupt for a hero who is, after all, the closest thing this century has to a knight on a white charger.

But Penn’s point of entry is that he doesn’t think Harry should be here at all, demanding solutions in a plot (to do with the smuggling of artefacts from Mexico, and the runaway daughter of a grasping, wasted actress) where the answers are unlikely to satisfy the real questions. Harry, it seems, is shying away from a more essential mystery to do with his own past and his currently stalled marriage. Beneath the film lurks the

same anti-intellectualism (Harry despises the art market that has put such a price on the artefacts, and both his actions and his speech are locked in some past glory as a football player) that was excavated by Aldrich in *Kiss Me Deadly*, and which both films see as integral to the detective ethos, the disdain of the investigator for any investigation that doesn't deal in the 'facts'. Penn's lack of attraction to the genre is thus not surprising, and the thrust of *Night Moves* is that, in terms of a whole range of dependent mysteries (reference is made to Kennedy, Watergate, and a stratum of political history), Harry truly is moving blind at dead of night. Spiky and allusive, *Night Moves* invokes a familiar range of chiaroscuro dread, while urging that what the private detective most needs is to graduate from the detective genre.

Richard Combs

THE MISSOURI BREAKS

(February 13)

Director: Arthur Penn.

U.S.A., 1976.

Script: Thomas McGuane.

Photography: Michael Butler.

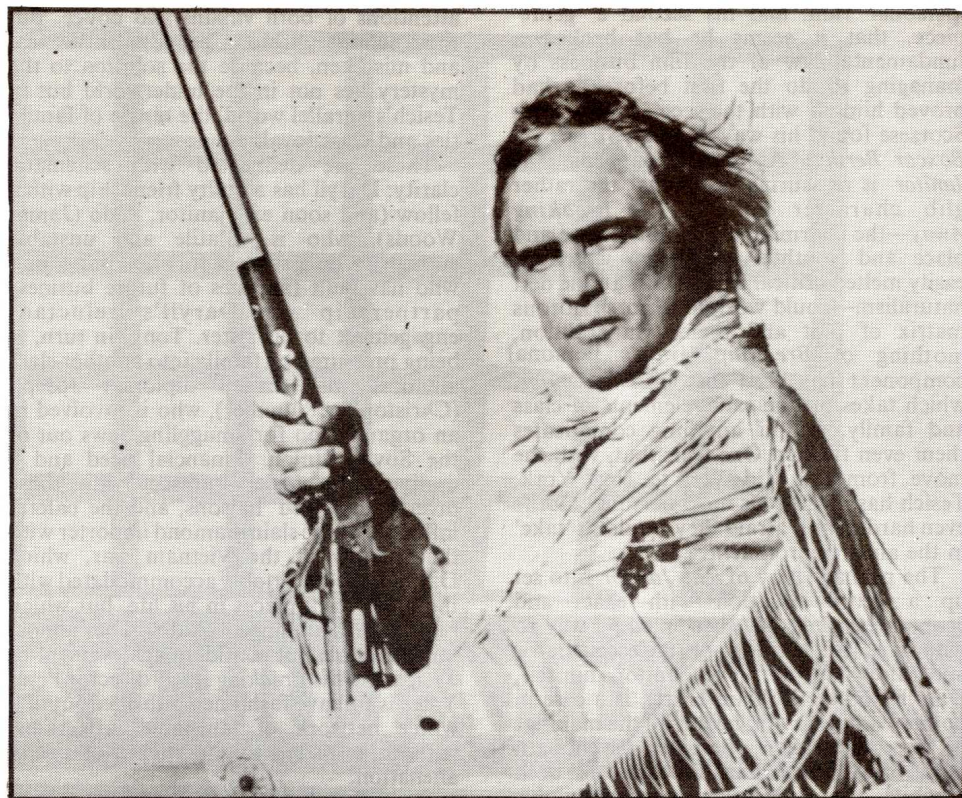
Music: John Williams.

Leading Players: Marlon Brando (*Robert Lee Clayton*), Jack Nicholson (*Tom Logan*), Randy Quaid (*Little Tod*), Kathleen Lloyd (*Jane Braxton*), Frederick Forrest (*Cary*), Harry Dean Stanton (*Calbin*).

Colour. Certificate AA. 126 minutes.

In the films since his ill-fated experiment with a more abstract cinema, *The Missouri Breaks* may be the closest Penn has come to returning to the methods of *Mickey One*. On the face of it, this is an unlikely comparison, given the personal genesis of the earlier film and the well-publicised fact that *The Missouri Breaks* was an exemplary Hollywood 'package', put together by producer Elliott Kastner with an eye to as many star ingredients as possible, and to which Penn was attracted simply for the opportunity of working with Marlon Brando and Jack Nicholson. There is about the project the air of a lark, which Penn has protested is how he saw it, and to which the robust, absurdist humour of scriptwriter Thomas McGuane easily lends itself. (Penn has mentioned the reference to *Tristram Shandy* by one of the characters as an arbitrary *trouvaille* which amused both himself and McGuane.) But Penn's stylisation breaks up the material in various ways, creating shifting levels of symbolic and actorish interpretation that send one scurrying in search of an overall meaning—to the apparent bemusement of Penn and the evident frustration of many critics.

In approaching the material from the outside, in his journeyman role, Penn has rendered McGuane's local eccentricity disconcertingly oblique, giving all the characters a kind of mythic dimension that overrides their knockabout behaviour. (McGuane's comedy, one might note, also goes hand in hand with a plot formula as rigid as anything from Hollywood for interpreting the West—a land he divides between manically repressive 'regulators' and anarchic rustlers, as previously evident in *Rancho Deluxe* and later in *Tom Horn*.) In Penn's mythology, the bumbling rustlers become unco-ordinated children, out of their league (and perhaps also out of place: Penn has mentioned the urban origin of most Western badmen), much like Billy's gang in *The Left-Handed Gun*. The regulator brought in to eradicate them is something else again, the most antic character in a film



where nothing really seems stable, a collection of mannerisms, accents, disguises and death-dealing weapons.

His masquerade might be partly attributable to Marlon Brando being given his head (or being uncheckable in taking it), and partly to Penn's view of him as both a multiple character and no character at all. In his vagueness and omniscience he takes on some of the quality of the power-behind-the-spotlight projected by the paranoid Mickey One. However, the real power in this latest update—the most fatalistic extremity—of Penn's West is the rancher Braxton (John McLiam), the embodiment of corporate capitalism about to have its day. In his garden, a kind of sport is carried on between the outlaw Logan (Jack Nicholson) and the regulator Clayton (Brando), who might both be descendants of the 'innocent' Westerner in Billy the Kid: Logan representing his youthful exuberance grown old and outdated, Clayton his unformed nature and moral blindness grown lethally insouciant.

Richard Combs

BREAKING AWAY

(February 27- March 1)

Director: Peter Yates.

U.S.A., 1979.

Script: Steve Tesich.

Photography: Matthew F. Leonetti.

Music: classical themes adapted by Patrick Williams.

Leading Players: Dennis Christopher (*Dave*), Dennis Quaid (*Mike*), Daniel Stern (*Cyril*), Jackie Earle Haley (*'Moocher'*), Barbara Barrie (*Mom*), Paul Dooley (*Dad*).

DeLuxe Colour. Certificate A. 101 minutes.

Steve Tesich's first screenplay invoked a subject rare enough in the American cinema to make it, in the U. S. at least, critically one of the most acclaimed films of its year. Set in the small university town of Bloomington, Indiana, it touches the subject of class antagonism: between the college students and the despised 'townies', in particular, the four adolescent friends (all male, this first time out), from lower-middle class families, whose rather amorphous ambitions since leaving high school might be leading them to

the working life exemplified by *The Janitor*, or by their own fathers, who have helped to build the university which now makes them feel socially inferior.

The trouble is that the details of class and social structure function as a naturalistic background to a revamping of *American Graffiti*, rather than as a theme in themselves. Such activities into which the boys drift in lieu of ambition—one works hard at his bicycling, only to be literally knocked from his dream by the revered Italian riders of the Cinzano team; the ex-football star anticipates lengthening days as an ex; and the pint-sized member of the group is in an amorous stew—tend to dwindle away as running jokes before they have certified that these kids have real problems of direction. Only towards the end, in fact, does the film ease back on the character comedy sufficiently to see Bloomington itself in terms other than as a charming location. And by then, with the build-up to the climactic cycle race between town and gown, the social history scarcely impinges. Tesich himself coasts home on the easy humour of the unresolved adolescent, abetted by the carefully scaled humanism of Peter Yates' direction. In the process, given the critical fallacy that a naturalistic lack of ambition in a film is the highest form of realism, *Breaking Away* was credited with points for things it scarcely attempted.

Richard Combs

THE JANITOR (Eyewitness)

(February 27-March 1)

Director: Peter Yates.

U.S.A., 1981.

Script: Steve Tesich.

Photography: Matthew F. Leonetti, Ron Lautere.

Music: Stanley Silverman, Charles Gerhardt.

Leading Players: William Hurt (*Darryl Deever*), Sigourney Weaver (*Tony Sokolow*), Christopher Plummer (*Joseph*), James Woods (*Aldo Mercer*), Irene Worth (*Mrs. Sokolow*).

Technicolor. Certificate AA. 108 minutes.

Breaking Away and *The Janitor*, one feels, should switch places. Steve Tesich's first produced screenplay is so obviously a

'personal' film, and his second a 'genre' piece, that it seems he has broken a fundamental law of the film business by managing to do the first before he had proved himself with the second (as Martin Scorsese found his way to *Mean Streets* via *Boxcar Bertha*). And, as it happens, *The Janitor* is reassuring proof that the rather glib character comedy of *Breaking Away*—the charming evocation of time and place and youthful confusion, which so easily melted critical hearts with a little deft naturalism—could work in a more rigorous matrix of plot and theme. In addition, nothing of *Breaking Away*'s personal component has been lost in *The Janitor*, which takes up the same elements of class and family, and if anything complicates them even further. One feels that, with the move from the Mid-West to New York, Tesich has pushed his most personal motifs even harder, as if afraid they wouldn't 'take' in the alien environment.

The primary ploy of *The Janitor* is to set up a genre situation with exact and economical skill, but then in some way to withhold itself, to insist on an eccentric or anomalous factor. The janitor himself, Darryl Deever (William Hurt), is a case in point. To begin with, he has all the makings of the ambivalent, potential-psychopath hero of a De Palma shocker: he both inhabits the dark places, spending his working hours alone at night in a large office building, and cultivates secrecy, living alone with a dog well-trained in security tactics, and committing only to a video recorder the truth of his passion for newscaster Tony Sokolow (Sigourney Weaver). But to counter-balance this, Tesich soon presents the evidence of his normalacy, which amounts to much the same family background as the kids in *Breaking Away*, and establishes his deprivation as social rather than psychological. Darryl's job, significantly enough, is just a job, a symptom of a working-class lack of ambition rather than of an unhealthy need for solitary recesses.

And, given the first opportunity to declare himself to Tony, Darryl seizes his chance. The opportunity happens to be the murder in his building of a Vietnamese diamond importer, and Darryl's come-on to the newswoman is that he knows more about the case than he has let on to the police. In Hitchcockian terms, Darryl thus unknowingly wishes upon himself the

attentions of both villains and police. But their actions all along prove both farcical and mistaken, because the solution to the mystery lies not in the underworld but in Tesich's parallel world, the tangle of family ties and class loyalties.

These are delineated with schematic clarity: Darryl has a guilty friendship with a fellow (and soon ex-) janitor, Aldo (James Woods), who is volatile and unstable enough to be a suspect for the killing, and who has built fantasies of future business partnership on Darryl's reluctant engagement to his sister, Tony, in turn, is being pressured by family into another class alliance, with Israeli diplomat Joseph (Christopher Plummer), who is involved in an organisation for smuggling Jews out of the Soviet Union. Financial need and a motive for murder intersect with these diverse 'arranged' liaisons, and the baleful influence of the slain diamond importer with the shadow of the Vietnam war, which Darryl has comfortably accommodated with the other dark places in his life, but which has plainly unhinged Aldo. The almost imperceptible but confident achievement of Tesich and his *Breaking Away* director Peter Yates is to have fashioned a thriller out of a whole network of 'alienated' affections, without resorting to the clichés of urban alienation.

Richard Combs

GEORGIA'S FRIENDS (Four Friends)

(February 24-26)

Director: Arthur Penn.
U.S.A., 1981.

Script: Steve Tesich.

Photography: Ghislain Cloquet.

Music: Elizabeth Swados, Carolyn Dutton, Norman Hollyn, George Avakian.

Leading Players: Craig Wasson (*Danilo Prozor*, "Danny"), Jodi Thelen (*Georgia Miles*), Michael Huddleston (*David Levine*), Jim Metzler (*Tom Donaldson*), Scott Hardt (*Young Danilo*), Elizabeth Lawrence (*Mrs. Prozor*) Miklos Simon (*Mr. Prozor*).

Technicolor. Certificate AA. 115 minutes.

In outline, *Georgia's Friends* is a simple tale of adolescents coming of age through the

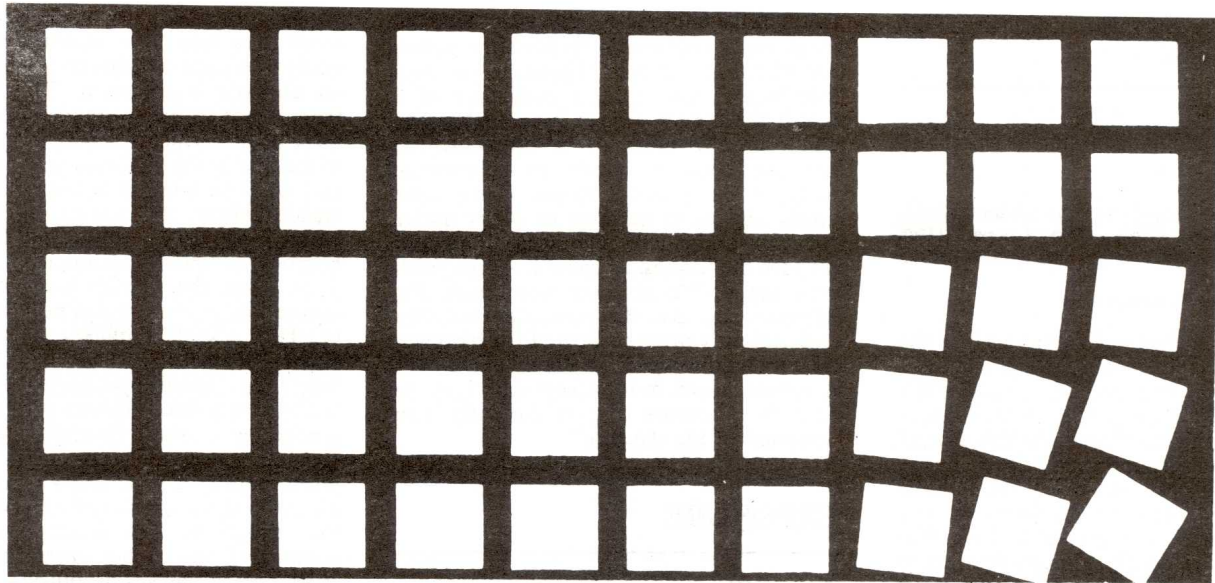
60s, the social turmoil of the decade reflected in the turmoil of the central character—on his way to achieving U. S. citizenship—as to how he should become American. The complicating factor—although it tends to work out as a balancing factor, holding opposed elements in lyrical suspension—is the differing attitudes of writer Tesich and director Penn on the subject of their respectively adopted and native home. The first complication is that these attitudes are the reverse of what one might expect. It is the ex-Yugoslavian Tesich, having come to the New World under circumstances similar to those of his young hero, who seems most determined to have worked his way into the American fabric, so that his experiences are related in terms of an inevitable outgrowing of the immigrant background (even with tragic reversals along the way); his hero Danilo (Craig Wasson) is upwardly mobile emotionally even when socially he is thwarted. For Penn, the process is both more abstract and more poetic; the Americanisation of Danilo is an intellectual leap of faith, a faith which, in the visual imagery, is always being consumed in flame so that it can be born again.

The native Penn, in other words, applies a style that is more European-seeming—fragmentary, allusive, refusing even to make the usual pragmatic narrative connections—than the immigrant Tesich's very American odyssey. This is true even though one can identify in the script an intellectual compare-and-contrast technique which distinguished *Breaking Away* and *The Janitor*, and which sets one American family (immigrant, living in a clapboard house, with the infernal steel smelters of East Chicago as a backdrop) alongside another (WASP patrician, living in Palladian luxury, in Eastern seaboard countryside that, like the statuary in the garden, has a classical idealism). Attempting to fulfil the immigrant dream in one defiant leap, by marrying across that divide, Danilo comes to grief, not through any fault of his own, or even flaw in the American Dream which promises help to he who helps himself, but through an inbuilt perversion of that idealism. This melodramatic turnaround in fact confuses Tesich's sociological focus, but ties in perfectly with Penn's taste for exploring social realism with the emblematic, arbitrary act of psychological realism. Where in *The Chase* he could make it no more than arbitrary, he invokes here the kind of political assassination that for him characterises the 60s with a kind of Brechtian shock.

What writer and director equally return to as the hope of their characters is a lyricism, both about the friendship of the title and community, or communal dreams, in general. In this respect, the film describes with what one might call a precise nostalgia the alternatives dreamed of in the 60s, embodied especially in Georgia (Jodi Thelen), who draws the other three friends like moths with her self-dramatising vivacity, and whose dream ends in grey hair and an ennui with being young, a social provocateuse, and an unachieved free spirit. Having separately survived the intervening storms, their strong mutual attraction usually expressed in quarrelsomeness, the fadeout for Danny and Georgia is inevitably togetherness. This is the most blatant, and perhaps the least successful, of the touches of movie-ishness which also inhabit the film. The most successful is undoubtedly the serenity with which Penn incongruously conjures John Ford as he suggests that something complete and achieved has been made of these fragments, broken connections and interrupted stories, lines and lives barely begun before they're ended.

Richard Combs





CINEMA AND IRELAND (Pt. 2)

“A TERRIBLE BEAUTY IS BORN”

Film and Ireland.

Terror and beauty, that unholy duality welded together by Yeats in the wake of the 1916 Rising, might serve equally well as epitaph to the American and British representation of Ireland on the screen. On the one hand, beauty: Ireland as pastoral idyll forged in the romantic imagination as urban industrialism's alter ego. On the other, terror: Ireland as strife-torn and dark, gripped by a motiveless violence. Although apparently contradictory, the two images are nonetheless but alternative sides of the same coin, both seeking to freeze Ireland within a mythological identity outside of social and historical processes. Ireland as rural idyll fixes it in quasi-feudalism, bypassed by the processes of capitalist modernisation and perennially enshrined in the language of Bord Failte (the Irish tourist board, who would still have us believe there are roads on which you won't see a car from one day to the next). Terror, on the other hand, becomes appropriated by the language of fate, with violence the primordial curse remaining a constant amidst the twists and turns of history. In both cases, change is a mirage.

As would befit the differing histories of Britain and America in relation to Ireland, the emphases of their cinematic representations pull in different ways. The massive Irish emigration to the United States has naturally led to a nostalgic pastoralism in Irish-American culture, while Britain's more tortured involvement in Irish history has promoted a blacker and more brooding vision. However, the example is not clear cut. British cinema has fuelled more than one piece of bucolic whimsy in its time, while American cinema has likewise cast its eye across the darker moments of Irish history. Take, for example, the case of that quintessentially Irish-American director John Ford (né Sean Aloysius O'Fienne). *The Quiet Man* finds in Ireland a timeless world of the imagination, free from the trappings of modernisation and in which all differences—class, sexual and religious—can ultimately be resolved. By contrast, in *The Informer* it is America which provides the locus of escape, while it is Ireland which becomes the home of strife and disharmony, the repository of death rather than rejuvenation.

Nonetheless, such imagery as this is more characteristically the property of the British cinema (and, indeed, it could be argued that *The Informer* is a typically American precisely because of its adoption of a European aesthetic). A formative influence here was *Odd Man Out*. Both in the type of story it tells (the last hours of a dying IRA gunman) and the way it tells it (via an 'expressionist' deployment of low-key lighting, wide-angle lenses and claustrophobic *mise en scène*), it promotes a romantic pessimism in which the political and cultural specifics of Irish history have been removed and its leading character, James Mason, becomes less an active hero than the powerless instrument of an abstract fate.

And it's precisely this sense of pessimism, with its view of a nation fatally gripped by violence for which there has been no rational or historic reason, which seems to survive in the British cinema. Thus *The Gentle Gunman*, in sharp contrast to the imagery of *The Quiet Man*, turns the Irish landscape into a wild and bleak limbo-land from which John Mills must rescue his younger brother; while *Shake Hands With the Devil*, despite its origins in the Irish national film studios at Ardmore, conveniently forgets the Irish civil war and paints its IRA hero, James Cagney, as psychopathically consumed with blood-lust merely for opposing the Treaty of Partition.

Likewise, more recent British films have tended to exploit the 'troubles' without in any way trying to explain or understand what's been happening. *Hennessy*, for example, is loosely based around Bloody Sunday but uses it merely as a coathanger for that most conventional of movie plots—personal revenge. Similarly, *The Long Good Friday* takes the interesting idea of counterposing two ethics of violence as represented by East End ganglord Bob Hoskins and the IRA. But by focusing almost exclusively upon Hoskins' increasingly perplexed responses to what's happening to him, the film affords no insight into the history behind the IRA and merely succeeds in making them into the new bogeymen whose attacks are as unexplained and inexplicable as those of the Indians on the stagecoach in any conventional Western.

As such, then, it might be argued that the British cinema has indeed bestowed something

of the ideological bedrock upon which television coverage of Northern Ireland has been built. Philip Schlesinger, for example, has argued in *Putting 'Reality' Together* that "broadcasting presents us with a series of de-contextualised reports of violence and fails to analyse and re-analyse the historical roots of the Irish conflict", and that this "cannot but contribute to the dominant public view of Northern Ireland's present troubles as largely incomprehensible and irrational". Much the same could be said of the British cinema's treatment of Ireland.

It's therefore an instructive antidote to examine the way indigenous Irish films have examined some similar questions. *The Dawn*, for example, is set in 1919-20, when the Black and Tan war—the most repressive period of the War of Independence—was being fought, and was made by a number of people who had actually been involved. *Exposure*, by contrast, is set in contemporary Ireland, but like *The Quiet Man* focuses on the rural West. Where the latter found fulfilment the former now 'exposes' the guilt and repression surrounding Irish male sexuality.

Not that because they are "Irish" they must necessarily be "true" in a way that the British and American cinemas cannot (as the Yeats phraseology suggests, 'terror' and 'beauty' are not just alien ideologies but deeply embedded in Irish culture itself). Rather, what makes both films so interesting is the manner in which they attempt to break out of the static mythologies the British and American cinemas have sought to impose. *The Dawn*, by offering a context and a rationality to the struggle for independence; *Exposure* by 'returning the repressed' into the Irish pastoral vision. As such, *Exposure* also puts on the agenda questions about the condition of society in the Irish Republic today, questions which outside of Ireland too often become suppressed in an exclusive concern with the North.

John Hill

John Hill is co-editor of a forthcoming collection of essays on the cinema and Ireland. Unless otherwise stated, the following notes on the films in the season have been written by him.

THE DAWN

(January 19)

Director: Tom Cooper.

Eire, 1936.

Leading Players: Brian O'Sullivan (*Brian Malone*), Donal O'Cahill (*Billy*), Tom Cooper (*Dan O'Donovan*), Eileen David (*Eileen*), James Gleeson (*Mr. Malone*).

Black and white. 90 minutes.

In 1980, when Prince Charles visited the National Film Theatre to see *Red Dust*, there was to have been an Irish film screened at the same time in NFT 2 as part of the 'A Sense of Ireland' programme. Somehow this second screening was postponed and Prince Charles was able to sit back and enjoy Ms. Harlow with the Irish safely off the premises. The film? *The Dawn*, a remarkable Irish film from the thirties which although amateur in origin was effectively Ireland's first indigenous sound feature. Made in the period 1934/35, it was the work of a Killarney garage and cinema owner, Tom Cooper, and a group of friends who set out to dramatise the war between the IRA and the Black and Tans, only fifteen years after the most bitter phase of the War of Independence had ended and in which a number of them had participated. The story includes covert intelligence operations, IRA ambushes and a controversial call for "the struggle to continue" (which led one cleric to complain that "judging from this film, I would expect to be told that Ireland today is a fit breeding ground for anti-clericalism and Communism"). Although handicapped by its limited technical resources, the film was an attempt to capture for Irish history something of what the Soviet cinema had done for Russia, emphasising the dignity and heroism of the Irish in their struggle for independence. As such its nationalism takes on something of a romanticised hue which

successfully suppresses any class tensions which might exist within the Irish themselves (the Malones and the O'Donovans possess both houses and accents indicative of a wealth the others do not have), while the film's employment of a conventional narrative structure tends to personalise many of the political issues. These were hardly objections destined to worry native audiences at the time, however, who packed in to see the film on its release. As one Irish critic put it: "As the American-made *The Informer* and the British-made *Ourselfs Alone* recently proved, films of the Irish war are tremendously popular here. *The Dawn* is, of course, much more acceptable than the other two, because it gives the truly Irish viewpoint of the struggle"

EXPOSURE

(January 19)

Director: Kieran Hickey.

Eire, 1978.

Script: Philip Davidson, Kieran Hickey.

Leading Players: T. P. McKenna, Bosco Hogan, Niall O'Brien, Catherine Schell.

Colour. 48 minutes. 16 mm.

Produced with the financial assistance of the Irish Arts Council's Film Script Award, *Exposure* has proved one of the most important of recent Irish films. Not quite "the first intelligent, skilful and unselfconsciously Irish film" one Irish critic claimed, but nonetheless a crucial film in raising questions of sexuality within a contemporary Irish context. Set in an isolated west of Ireland hotel, the film traces the effect of a female French photographer on three male surveyors who are the hotel's only guests. Caroline, the photographer, is young, attractive, economically independent, travels and is sexually liberated. She enters into an affair with the

youngest of the surveyors only to find the result is a fetishistic violence against her possessions and ultimate re-establishment of an all-male equilibrium. The 'exposure', then, is not so much the photograph of the three men she allows to fade away at the end of the film as the exposure of the repressions and violence implicit in Irish male culture. Appropriately, the setting is the west of Ireland, whose landscape has formed the bedrock of Irish romanticism. As in *The Quiet Man*, the woman is associated with nature, but here there can be no integration of her sexual impulses. The sexually independent woman is "other", French not Irish (and, indeed, a problem with the movie is the rather conventional way in which it associates sexual freedom with being French, attached to nature and a photographer à la so many quasi-liberated Hollywood heroines), and accordingly must face expulsion. The result is as bleak a portrait of patriarchal miserabilism as the Irish cinema has yet produced.

THE INFORMER

(February 9)

Director: John Ford.

U.S.A., 1935.

Script: Dudley Nichols, from the novel by Liam O'Flaherty.

Photography: Joseph H. August.

Music: Max Steiner.

Leading Players: Victor McLaglen (*Gypo Nolan*), Heather Angel (*Mary McPhillip*), Preston Foster (*Don Gallagher*), Margot Grahame (*Katie Madden*), Wallace Ford (*Frankie McPhillip*), Una O'Connor (*Mrs. McPhillip*).

Black and white. Certificate A. 91 minutes.

Of all American directors, John Ford was the most consistent in his turning to Ireland for inspiration. As early as 1926 he directed *The Shamrock Handicap*, about Irish horse-racing, while in 1965, near the end of his career, he began work on a biography of Sean O'Casey, *Young Cassidy*, later to be completed by Jack Cardiff. In between Ireland and questions of Irishness had proved a focal concern in movies set both in Ireland (*The Plough and the Stars*, *The Quiet Man*) and elsewhere (*How Green Was My Valley*, *The Last Hurrah*). Of all these, probably the most famous was Ford's adaptation of Liam O'Flaherty's *The Informer* in 1935. Ford picked up an Oscar for Best Director and the New York Best Director Award but like many other much-awarded productions it has not stood the test of changing critical opinion, which has reacted against the film's overt symbolism and self-consciously "arty" veneer in favour of Ford's later and more relaxed work within a Western format. Whatever its final ranking in Ford's auteurist pantheon, it nonetheless remains a key movie in the deployment of "expressionist" technique to portray Irish history within an abstract frame from which social specifics have been removed. Janey Place has argued the point well (in "The Non-Western Films of John Ford"):

"The film treats the historical subject—the 1922 Sinn Féin Rebellion—as a mythic setting, visually abstracting the characters, situations, and ideological issues from the realistic base the novel insisted upon. It thus becomes the Christian and pagan myth of sin and redemption through suffering which is acted out by one member of a community for the benefit of the entire community. The elements of ritual and fate—the blind man, the entrapping shadows, the blowing poster—mark the progress of the myth which fate has determined and signalled from the opening





THE GENTLE GUNMAN

(February 20)

Director: Basil Dearden.
Great Britain, 1952.
Script: Roger MacDougall, from his own play.
Photography: Gordon Dines.
Music: John Greenwood.
Leading Players: John Mills (*Terence Sullivan*), Dirk Bogarde (*Matt Sullivan*), Elizabeth Sellars (*Maureen Fagan*), Barbara Mullen (*Molly Fagan*), Robert Beatty (*Shinto*).
Black and white. Certificate A. 86 minutes.

Dealing with the IRA campaign during the blitz, *The Gentle Gunman* is something of a stylistic and ideological heir to *Odd Man Out*, but whose romantic pessimism is tempered by a characteristically Ealing appeal to international "little man" brotherhood and Dearden-Ralph concern for "social responsibility". John Mills is the IRA man turned pacifist whose intention is now to dissuade his brother from further violent involvements. Irish violence becomes synonymous with a game handed from one generation to the next, *sui generis*, pointless and self-defeating. As such the Irish question becomes represented, to use the words of Ray Durnat, "exclusively in terms of the Irish struggling against their own tendency to violence". Irish violence thus becomes the mark of disequilibrium, the problem which has to be solved in the same way as juvenile delinquency (*Violent Playground*), race (*Sapphire*) and homosexuality (*Victim*) have signalled the problem in Dearden's other work. What makes the film so fascinating is the difficulty it then has in "closing off" the violent excess it has set in motion. This particularly revolves around the film's ambivalent linking of violence and sexuality whereby the repression of violence seems to imply the repression of sexuality. In effect the film has three different endings, a 'trebling' indicative of the fraughtness with which the film achieves its 'socially responsible' balance of violence and reason.

THE QUIET MAN

(March 6)

Director: John Ford.
U.S.A., 1952.
Script: Frank S. Nugent, from the story by Maurice Walsh.
Photography: Winton C. Hoch.
Music: Victor Young.
Leading Players: John Wayne (*Sean Thornton*), Maureen O'Hara (*Mary Kate Danaher Thornton*), Victor McLaglen (*Red Will Danaher*), Barry Fitzgerald (*Michaelen og Flynn*), Ward Bond (*Father Peter Lonergan*), Mildred Natwick (*Sarah Tillane*).
Colour. Certificate U. 129 minutes.

It's often been argued (especially by Peter Wollen) that we can trace in Ford's work a slow but sure disillusionment with traditional Western values, so that by the time we reach *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964) it is the Indians who now represent dignity and civilization while Wyatt Earp (the hero of *My Darling Clementine*) has become decadent, dissolute and cowardly. As part of this process of disillusionment we also find in Ford's work a tendency to transplant the "ideal, moral community", once represented by the pioneering West, to other foreign communities as yet uncorrupted by the effects of modern civilization. Thus, in *Donovan's Reef*, Ford counterposes the 'naturalness' of the Polynesian community of Ailakaowa to the cynically materialist values of Boston and the East. Likewise, in



The Quiet Man, Ireland represents for John Wayne a haven from the destructive impulses of America (Pittsburgh is a place with furnaces so hot 'a man forgets his fear of Hell'). The community of Innisfree (recalling the Yeats poem) represents a cosmic unity with nature (earth, wind, fire and especially water are all important motifs in the film) and a society which is harmonious because both traditional and populist. Wayne's integration into this community is thus mediated via Maureen O'Hara, who is both associated with nature (note particularly her opening appearance) and traditional forms of community regulation. It is this which gives the real significance to her refusal to consummate her marriage until Wayne fights for her dowry. Some feminist critics have perhaps been overeager to read this as a 'progressive' assertion of female independence. On the contrary, the structural importance of the dowry is precisely because it signifies the regulation of sexual desire within traditional forms. Thus the reconciliation of Wayne and O'Hara becomes a public one celebrated in the framework of the donnybrook, that traditional but populist means for resolving differences. Sex and violence are not so much repressed as integrated into a framework of community values. For Ford, this the only way they can take on a meaning.

THE RISING OF THE MOON

(March 9)

Director: John Ford.
U.S.A., 1957.
Script: Frank S. Nugent. Based on the story 'The Majesty of the Law' by Frank O'Connor, and the plays 'A Minute's Wait' by Michael J. McHugh and 'The Rising of the Moon' by Lady Gregory.
Photography: Robert Krasker.
Music: Eamonn O'Gallagher.
Leading Players: Tyrone Power (*Host*), Noel Purcell (*Dan O'Flaherty*), Cyril Cusack (*Inspector Michael Dillon*), Jack McGowan (*Mickey J., the Poteen Man*), Jimmy O'Dea (*Porter*), Tony Quinn (*Station Master*).
Black and white. 81 minutes.

Made under the working title of "The Three-Leaf Clover", *The Rising of the Moon* consists of three separate stories which taken together represent almost a compendium of Ford's Irish concerns. "A Minute's Wait" is effectively an extended version of the opening scene of *The Quiet Man*, in which a whole galaxy of "Oirish" performers wreak havoc on a railway timetable. "The Rising of the Moon" re-works the themes of *The Informer*, presenting us with an escaped IRA man and the temptations facing a slow-witted policeman to turn informer. It also reproduces the 'expressionist' visual style of the former film, employing the services of Robert Krasker as cameraman, who had

shot. This operation of fate is radically different from the one of social process in the book. It leaves no room for critique or protest, the hallmark of Ford's best works, and makes *The Informer* an easily accessible but fundamentally uncomplicated retelling—and reinforcing—of an old myth".

ODD MAN OUT

(February 9)

Director: Carol Reed.
Great Britain, 1947.
Script: F. L. Green, R. C. Sherriff. Based on the novel by F. L. Green.
Photography: Robert Krasker.
Music: William Alwyn.
Leading Players: James Mason (*Johnny*), Robert Newton (*Lukey*), Kathleen Ryan (*Kathleen*), Robert Beatty (*Dennis*), Cyril Cusack (*Pat*).
Black and white. Certificate A. 117 minutes.

Much-lauded at the time ("the best film that has ever been made in Britain", according to no less an authority than the *Daily Express*), *Odd Man Out* is perhaps the best-known of British films about Ireland though, like *The Informer*, its overwrought expressionist style has increasingly looked more mannered than profound. (Andrew Sarris has aptly, if rather unkindly, incuded director Carol Reed in his category of 'Less than meets the eye'.) And, again much like *The Informer*, debate over the worthwhileness of the film's artifice has tended to obscure a closer inspection of its ideological effects (though Edgar Anstey did attack the film for its importation of French existentialism). The film's opening title disavows a close connection with the political detail of Northern Ireland: "It is not concerned with the struggle between the law and an illegal organisation, but only with the conflict in the hearts of the people when they become unexpectedly involved." However, it would be fairer to say that the film does not so much omit the specific political questions as displace them, through its choice of formal strategies (Sophoclean narrative, expressionist stylistics, emphasis on time and the elements), onto a terrain where humanity is de-socialised, de-historicised and robbed of any rationality outside of an inexorable fatalism. Tom Nairn (in *The Break-up of Britain*) has commented on how Ireland's apparent intractability to standards of reason has so often led to an explanation of historical despair: the 'myth of atavism' whereby only 'a specific historical curse, a luckless and predetermined fate, can account for the war'. And it's this perceptual scheme which *Odd Man Out* is in effect reproducing: Johnny's fate being precisely a luckless and predetermined one, motored in turn by those recurrent spectres of Irish history, violence and 'futile' causes.

also shot the visually similar *Odd Man Out*. "The Majesty of the Law" is less typical but focuses on the characteristic confrontation between the old and traditional as represented by Old Dan and the new and bureaucratic forces of law and order which are taking him to court. Altogether the three episodes celebrate the "rebellious" spirit of the Irish and its refusal to bow to alien rule—be it the British, the law court or the railway timetable. Despite a brave attempt by McBride and Wilmington to retrieve the film as one of Ford's "great works", it's clear that the omnibus format vitiates the depth of meaning characteristic of the full-length features. What we really get are shallow vignettes of Ford's Irish consciousness which are, perhaps, all the more intriguing because of the way they juxtapose their stylistically different visions.

MISE EIRE (I am Ireland)

(March 9)

Director: George Morrison.
Eire, 1959.
Black and white. 90 minutes.

The following notes on *Mise Eire* are extracted from an article by Kevin Rockett.

Mise Eire (I am Ireland, 1959) and *Saoirse?* (*Freedom?*, 1961) were the first feature-length indigenous Irish films made since *The Dawn*. Like *The Dawn*, they were made on 35 mm. and were distributed widely in Irish cinemas.

The two films, running for ninety minutes each [N.B. the Arts Lab is screening the first, but not the second film], present with available graphic, photographic, newspaper and most importantly, filmic material, events leading to Independence. The project originated in 1947 when George Morrison saw Alberto Cavalcanti's 1942 compilation film, *Film and Reality*, which had been made for the B.F.I. . . . In 1952, Morrison began work on a *catalogue raisonné* (to use his term; it has not been published) of Irish film material and had indexed 300,000 feet of Irish actualities by the time *Mise Eire* was first shown. Only about twenty per cent of the material in that film was found in Ireland. Looking back twenty years after

Mise Eire's completion, Morrison wrote that "The premiere of *Mise Eire* marked an epoch in the growth of filmmaking in Ireland. It was at once the first full feature-length Irish production to be made here with Irish money since the War, and also, internationally speaking, the first of the sophisticated new style of compilation films which were to be characterised by an integrated use of film actualities, still actualities, period graphics, printed documents and manuscript sources all bound together by means of a specially shot poetic imagery and an outstanding musical score".

The score by Sean O'Riada, as one of the film's assistant editors, Louis Marcus, wrote at the time of the film's release, "performs the vital function of making warm what otherwise would tend to be exactly specialised: it bridges the gap between the historian and the emotional needs of the general public". Marcus went on to describe the film as "truly an event of the most shattering consequence, not only for Irish cinema but in the general life of the country".

Please note that the soundtrack of the film is in Irish and that the print is NOT subtitled. A leaflet will be available at the time of screening with information about the content of the film.

THE OUTSIDER

(March 23)

Director: Tony Luraschi.
Netherlands, 1979.
Script: Tony Luraschi. Based on the Novel *The Heritage of Michael Flaherty* by Colin Leinster.
Photography: Ricardo Aronovitch.
Music: Ken Thorne.
Leading Players: Craig Wasson (*Michael Flaherty*), Sterling Hayden (*Seamus Flaherty*), Patricia Quinn (*Siobhan*), Niall O'Brien (*Emmet Donovan*), T.P. McKenna (*John Russell*).
Colour. Certificate AA. 128 minutes.

Refused a screening at the London Film Festival in 1979, *The Outsider* has possibly been the most controversial of recent films about the North (especially in its explicit illustration of the security forces' torture of an innocent young Catholic). The film is essentially a sour look at the Irish-American idealism which prompts a young American

from Detroit to volunteer for the Provos. Initially involved in the summary execution of a Unionist magistrate, he is subsequently sent to Belfast, where he finds himself the pawn of deathly forces on both sides. The IRA hope for his quick death to provide a convenient martyr and money-raiser in the States, while the British for their part conspire to deceive the IRA into believing the young man is an informer (significantly absent in the film is any representation of Protestants, their community and traditions). Managing to escape this morass, he returns to America only to find his dying immigrant grandfather, whose heady rhetoric of fighting the Black and Tans inspired him in the first place, was a fake. In plot structure the film as such is not too original. *Hennessy* had already stranded its loner hero between the Brits and the Provos while Bridie Quilty in *I See A Dark Stranger* had faced a similar disillusionment with her forebears' republican credentials. What is novel about the film, however, is its determination to be contemporary, to examine both the IRA and the security forces from inside, and its refusal to take sides. That its end result should prove such a despairing 'plague on both your houses' makes its loss of nerve all the more regrettable.

THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY

(March 23, 25-27)

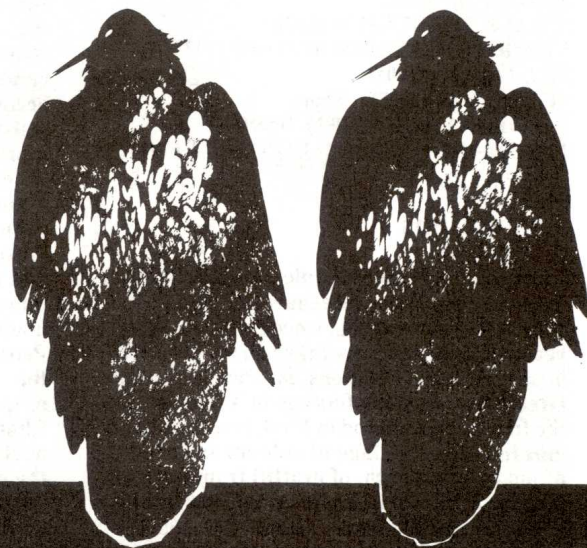
Director: John Mackenzie.
Great Britain, 1979.
Script: Barrie Keeffe.
Photography: Phil Meleux.
Music: Francis Monkman.
Leading Players: Bob Hoskins (*Harold Shand*), Helen Mirren (*Victoria*), Dave King (*Perky*), Bryan Marshall (*Harris*), Eddie Constantine (*Charles*), Brian Hull (*Alan*).
Colour. Certificate X. 114 minutes.

Made as part of a deal between producer Barry Hanson and Black Lion—a subsidiary of Associated Communications Corporation, including ATV—to produce three films, two for television (*Bloody Kids*, *Very Like A Whale*) and one for theatrical exhibition (*The Long Good Friday*). Despite this, *The Long Good Friday* was originally planned for a TV screening by ACC, which in turn required nearly ten minutes of cuts (some of the film's violence plus references to the IRA). Hanson refused to accept the cuts and after a public controversy ACC sold back the rights to the makers and it opened in a cinema after all, to considerable commercial success.

Its premiss is intriguing: a sort of *Performance*-type confrontation between two counterposing ethics. Rational, quasi-capitalist East End gangsterism vs. no holds barred Irish terrorism. However, whatever novelty the film might hold in the context of British cinema (its flashy, violent and dynamic surface contrasting sharply with the British film's characteristic restraint and repression), it's undoubtedly the case that in ideological effect the film is very nearly reactionary. Narrative focus is by and large confined to gangleader Bob Hoskins, and his reactions to the effect of the IRA on his empire. Even allowing for allegories of the British state, the net result is to obscure the nature and background of the IRA behind a veil of chic macho invincibility. Thus, while the IRA are this time the survivors, it's a triumph that really has no meaning in the absence of any real rationality to their repeated assaults upon Hoskins' order and stability. As such it becomes merely the ideological obverse of dominant representations of Irish violence.



PETER GREENAWAY



Peter Greenaway. White. English. Forty years old ('too old isn't it?'). Eccentric. Laconic. And now—in commercial and media terms, by some bizarre twist of fate—Britain's most successful experimental filmmaker ever. His latest film, *The Draughtsman's Contract*, produced by the British Film Institute (with a substantial investment by Channel 4 when the project spiralled over budget), has broken art-house records in London—making it a bigger money-earner than almost all the commercial releases of the late autumn. Who would have expected it?

Greenaway first came to critical attention about four years ago, with a mini-feature called *A Walk through H*. At the time (and still now) he was living in a tiny two-up-two-down terraced house in West London. The parlour downstairs had been converted into a cramped cutting room. And Greenaway's paintings, which were the visual text of the film, hung in their dozens all over the walls. Most were tiny (six inches square or so), and they looked like a cross between landscapes and hieroglyphics. Not exactly what you might expect from a graduate of the rather stuffy Walthamstow Art College—a place which the filmmaker describes as 'a home to that whole English post-impressionist tradition: when I was there in the first years of the sixties, they had never heard of Bauhaus even'.

Greenaway went to Walthamstow partly because he came from that part of London, from the ragged borders of Essex and Epping Forest, 'the scraggy orange-peel bus ticket end of the city' as he describes it. Suburbia. The experience seems to underlie a great deal of his work. The obsessive symmetries of his films, the cataloguing by numbers, even the endless, fruitless wanderings of the traveller speaking over the paintings in *A Walk through H*, seem to suggest the innumerable boxes of suburban roads. The avenues and the cul-de-sacs. 'It is my background. So I can't just chuck it out. What would I replace it with?' asks Greenaway. 'But it will be another ten years before we are distant enough to actually film suburbia . . . for the moment all the trendies are buying those ghastly houses they built in the '30s, with the stained glass parrots and the bay windows'.

Though he had made a few shorts at art college and after, he keeps them well buried. The first film that he still acknowledges is *Intervals*, which was begun in the mid-'60s with some footage shot in Venice while the film festival was in progress. The finished short is a collage of words and pictures,

posters and peeling walls and the odd glimpse of the tourist Venice submerged in a collage of visual bric-a-brac. In flashes one can see the elliptical, self-referring humour that gradually fleshes out his later work. By the time of *A Walk through H* it has developed into a full-scale mythology with its own characters, history and moral dilemmas. In *Vertical Features Remake*, those characters—warring archivists and ornithologists, pedants, obsessives—are the *raison d'être* for a complex fictional re-creation of the life and work of Tulse Luper (Greenaway's alter ego and super man, a shadowy figure of intellectual guerilla warfare). In *The Falls*, the themes and characters surface more obliquely: the film catalogues the existence of 92 characters in the aftermath of a mysterious apocalypse; some of them are established by reference to other Greenaway characters; and the whole scheme, in which humans appear to be turning into birds, reflects the long-standing obsession with ornithology as the ultimate system of signs. By the time of the recent film, *The Draughtsman's Contract*, the characters have largely disappeared, leaving behind a jungle of themes and meanings. *Draughtsman's Contract*, taken as a whole, is a joke; but in its parts, the film ties together several very serious parallel investigations. It hints at the relations between capitalism (social organisation), landscape ('natural' organisation) and painting (fictional and perceptual organisation). It hangs on the pivot between the creative turmoil of the 17th century and the complacent wealth-making of the 18th. Above all, the whole film hangs on the idea that the opposition between reality and illusion is a false one—in every direction as we turn our gaze, the scene is full of signs which exude uncountable meanings for us.

Intellectually, Greenaway's position is most unusual. Though he has flirted with it, his work rejects the conceptual and minimalist filmmaking tradition of the British avant-garde over the past ten years. That, rather than the unique amount of support he has received from the British Film Institute, may be the reason why other filmmakers were so angered when he received the grant to make *Draughtsman*. What his work draws on is a very personal re-interpretation of British Romanticism (Coleridge in theory and Wordsworth in practice). That is the source for his equation of the rural landscape and the landscape of the mind. The catch, the twist which makes his films so genuinely 'experimental', is that within those romantic

excursions there is no sense of reaching up to a higher good, or god. The upward spiral simply leads the viewer onward, in a process which has no simple ending, and in which the individual viewer does really begin to search their life experience for clues and hidden codes.

All of which might be said to characterise Greenaway's career as well. He has always revelled in the fictional aspects of his own life—the mistakes in articles about him become hints for future projects. The debris of previous films are the rubble foundations for further buildings. Thus the discarded dialogue from *Draughtsman's Contract* has been turned by him into a stage play for 26 characters, called *The Billiard Game*. The fascination with other experimental artists (including John Cage and Philip Glass) has led to a series of films on those artists for Channel 4, made when they came to Britain earlier this year. And the antics of Cissie Colpitts and other members of the Greenaway Fictional Personality Archive (FPA) are the basis for a new film to be entitled *Drowning By Numbers*. But it's no longer certain that the future projects will all be films: 'I can imagine a time', says Peter Greenaway, 'when I will simply end up writing. I've always got three scripts on the bounce, and by the time I can get everything together to make the film, I'm already onto the next idea. Writing, in the end, is much quicker and more immediate'.

Chris Auty

PETER GREENAWAY Biographical Details

Peter Greenaway was born in England in 1942. He trained as a painter and first exhibited his pictures at the Lord's Gallery in 1964. He began working as a film editor in 1965 and spent eleven years cutting films, including numerous documentaries for the Central Office of Information. In 1966 he started making his own films and has continued to produce films, paintings, novels and illustrated books ever since.

Filmography

TRAIN (1966). Short.
TREE (1966). Short.
REVOLUTION (1967). Short.
FIVE POSTCARDS FROM CAPITAL CITIES (1967). Short.
INTERVALS (1969). Short.
EROSION (1971). Short.
H IS FOR HOUSE (1973; re-edited in 1978). Short.

WINDOWS (1975). Short.
 WATER (1975). Short.
 WATER WRACKETS (1975). Short.
 GOOLE BY NUMBERS (1976). Short.
 DEAR PHONE (1977). Short.
 1-100 (1978). Short.
 A WALK THROUGH H (1978).
 VERTICAL FEATURES REMAKE (1978).
 THE FALLS (1980).
 ACT OF GOD (1981). Short.
 ZANDRA RHODES (1981). Short.
 THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT (1982).

Short Films

There is no simple rule of thumb that characterises Peter Greenaway's short films. Which is not surprising, since they span fifteen years of work and were taken on with a variety of semi-serious intentions. *Intervals*, for which Greenaway shot the footage in Venice during the film festival period in 1964, is recognisably '60s in feel—a collage of colours and sounds, of music and speech, of graffiti from the walls of the once-great commercial hub of the Mediterranean. *Dear Phone*, by complete contrast, is a mocking little movie about the misuses of the telephone, as an instrument of communication. Punctuated by the ringing of phones and by some extraordinary shots of that British Institution, the telephone box, in bizarre locations, it patches together a game of Chinese Whispers in which messages grow more and more distorted and fantastic as the film progresses. *Windows* is even more coy, one of the films which has resulted in its director being accused of whimsy: at a small village in the parish of Wardour, the movie details a catalogue of (fictional) statistics about death by defenestration (falling from Windows). Lurking in the background, of course, are a whole series of cinematic gags: windows are frames; Wardour is the parish after which Wardour St. (the London centre of the British movie industry) is named. As in so much of Greenaway's work, the jokes are achieved by an overload of information, elliptically applied. As coincidence piles on coincidence, the strain on our belief in the reality of the film (let alone the reality of the world it depicts) becomes impossible. But rather than letting it rest there, a text book exercise in de-construction (or mis-construction at least), Greenaway ends his short with a romantic twist that suggests we have been watching Romeo and Juliet rather than an advertisement for safety in the home. And in the process, *Windows* asks us to ask who is making the film—the director? the audience? or the web of shared assumptions about windows, safety, statistics and romance which lie between the two? By comparison, *Water Wrackets* is rather slight, though it was originally intended as the first part of a mammoth series of shorts that would build fictions simply out of images of landscape. Set in a world of streams, reservoirs and woods, filmed in a dusky, mysterious light, *Water Wrackets* puts a mythology on its sound track to match the romantic images—the effect is the closest that Greenaway has yet come to the whimsical world of Tolkien, and though the images themselves are magical, one is glad that the filmmaker decided not to pursue the large scale project any further.

Exactly the reverse is true of *Act of God*, which could have been expanded to feature length without too much strain. This 28-minute film was commissioned by Thames Television's Udi Eichler as part of their 'Take Six' series—half a dozen short films by experimental filmmakers which were broadcast two years ago. The subject is lightning (hence the wry title). Or rather: those who have been struck by lightning and survived. Out of this funny cabbage-patch subject for a documentary, Greenaway harvests a mad profusion of human experience

which seems more fictional than real. The Welsh cricket team, struck down to a man while playing a match on the village green one thundery August afternoon. The woman walker who survived a bolt of lightning with two little holes burned in her walking shoes as the only evidence of her ordeal. Quiet suburban couples explaining how lightning came into their lives. Asked if any of the accounts in the film were staged, Greenaway insists: 'They were all absolutely true. Believe it or not'. The sum effect of *Act of God* is hard to describe—a sort of agnostic, empirical argument for believing not in God, but in a rather fickle Providence. But the film, which looked marvellous on TV simply because there was nothing to suggest that this was anything other than a straightforward documentary, is made in the editing. For the past twelve years, Peter Greenaway has been a regular editor for the Central Office of Information (the propaganda department which puts out short films on everything from health care to nuclear fallout). And *Act of God* looks for all the world like a COI film gone strangely mad, romantic, fictional—the act of revenge of a deranged archivist . . . or film editor.

Chris Auty

A WALK THROUGH H

(March 30)

Director: Peter Greenaway.
 Great Britain, 1978.
 Script: Peter Greenaway.
 Photography: John Rosenberg, Bert Walker.
 Music: Michael Nyman.
 Featuring: Jean Williams.
 Eastman Colour. 41 minutes. 16 mm.

A Walk through H is the film that first brought Peter Greenaway public attention—at the London Film Festival. It is also his most insistent piece of work, in which repetition and recurrence play a major role, carried along by the staccato hail of a musical score by Michael Nyman, who has become Greenaway's regular collaborator. In essence, the story is simple: a man walks through a maze, alternately puzzled and delighted by its intricacies, seeking some conclusion. But the maze—a landscape of cobbled lanes, walled fields, and nameless hamlets—is achieved by panning a rostrum camera back and forth over Peter Greenaway's own meticulous paintings. The idea for the film, like the painting perhaps, was partly suggested to the filmmaker when he discovered proof copies of Ordnance Survey maps on which there were errors. And the central metaphor of the film is bird life and flight—as the protagonist's advance is described in voice-over, a whole background history surfaces, involving the elusive Tulse Luper and the dastardly Van Huyten, keeper of the birds at Amsterdam zoo. As the journey progresses, it becomes clear that this is the story of a man on the point of death, and journeying into another world. And when the camera finally pulls back from the paintings to reveal an art gallery (with a copy of Tulse Luper's authoritative book on bird migration lying on the reception desk), the film's subtitle becomes clear: 'A Walk Through H—the Re-incarnation of an Ornithologist'.

Since making the film, Greenaway has talked about the possibility of telling the same story using another metaphor of taxonomy—recipes for bread, perhaps, instead of bird flights and an ornithologist. But he has not made the film and one can guess why. Not only is there something mythologically coherent about dreams of flight (from Daedalus to Freud's catalogue of sexual fantasy); there is also something

special about ornithology as a science. Its sense of order and tidiness is in direct opposition to the mysterious wilfulness of its subject. Ornithology is a science of repression (because its order tries to negate the apparent arbitrariness of bird freedom); and of aspiration (because dreams of flight as escape seem to be as old as human culture). And in the discord between these two possibilities, Greenaway elaborates his fantasy: 'I've always had this particular . . . schizophrenic problem, about trying to hold romanticism in check, by imposing rigid structures from outside. The drawing pins are there to keep the butterflies from flying away, as it were'. On the one hand: the dream of flight, of transcendence, of passage into a second life as a creature of the air. And on the other, the squabbles and long-remembered bitterness of Van Huyten and the other bureaucrats of ornithology. In the classical world there would be no ambiguity of wishes here: order and classification would hold supreme, H (heaven? hell?) could wait. In the romantic order also, the problem would be easily resolved—the process of memory, of recollection in tranquility, would overtake any prosaic difficulties of the moment. But in *A Walk through H* what is lacking, precisely, is time: the duration of the film, its forty-minute span, is also the only time left for the ornithologist as he prepares for flight. And the subject of the movie is so hard to pin down. As the camera pulls back from the landscape of signs and into the world of the art gallery, we are left with a world that is very evidently fictional. The poet/seer/painter/filmmaker has deserted his subject in a way the Romantics could never have contemplated. And the viewer is left poised, waiting also for their moment of reincarnation.

Chris Auty

VERTICAL FEATURES REMAKE

(March 30)

Director: Peter Greenaway.
 Great Britain, 1978.
 Script: Peter Greenaway.
 Photography: Peter Greenaway, Bert Walker.
 Music: Michael Nyman, Brian Eno.
 Narrator: Colin Cantlie.
 Colour. 45 minutes. 16mm.

There are two possible lines of attack on the work of Peter Greenaway, and both have been pursued (though not very much in print). On the one hand, from a conventional liberal point of view, his elaboration of private mythologies can be accused of a certain eccentric English feyness—and pigeonholed with the likes of Tolkien, Lewis Carroll and Mervyn Peake. On the other hand, from the ranks of '70s 'oppositional' film culture, it was easy to accuse his experiments not only of a lack of politics (which they have never had, as such), but also of a lack of formal rigour. And, paradoxically, both accusations—of feyness and formalism without rigour—are quite easily applied to *Vertical Features Remake*.

The feyness comes in the film's lengthy elaboration of disputes between fictional academics over the Tulse Luper legacy—disputes which were begun in *A Walk through H*. And the lack of rigour comes simply because Greenaway takes on certain hallowed conventions of the British avant-garde and pulls off the forms *better* than they have been done by others. For *Vertical Features* is both a 'structural' film (organised by mathematical rules, in which ascending lengths of film are edited together,

picturing static material) and a 'landscape' film (its subject, quite literally, is the vertical features of English landscape, from fences and trees to rugby posts).

The project originally arose because Greenaway was toying with some old footage of English landscape, and then conceived of a film which would not only expound the well-established 'landscape' and 'structural' forms but also encompass and discuss them, as if from outside. The result has irritated many filmmakers on the avant-garde scene—probably because they resent the notion that a film might be made from outside both conventional and oppositional cinema.

Vertical Features is again populated by Gang Lion, Cissie Colpitts and the other figures from the Greenaway FPA (Fictional Persons Archive). It also re-edits the same landscape footage four times in a row, to the sound of a Michael Nyman score, and suggests that these are four versions of a project on which Tulse Luper (cf. *A Walk through H*) was working—his intentions are now in dispute amongst the academics of the IRR (Institute for Reclamation and Restoration) and other bodies. There is no doubt that a rather cute tone creeps into the film as similarities between the IRR and 'real' bodies in our cultural world (the Arts Council, the British Film Institute) begin to surface. But the beauty of *Vertical Features* is the debate it contains over the so-called 'Session 3'—described as the project for 'the creation of a dynamic landscape'.

For Greenaway the supreme joke lies in the idea that one might 'create' a dynamic landscape (and, by the way of a parallel, in the art bureaucracy idea that one might create a 'dynamic' cultural landscape). Both as a Romantic and as a modernist, Greenaway's films are committed to a view of the world in which meaning emerges and is infinite—in direct opposition to a hardline conceptual view of meaning as external, specific, and limited. For Greenaway, as for Robbe-Grillet or for Warhol in their different ways, a still frame image of something from life will gradually become permeated by metaphorical association from the audience. And Greenaway's answer (unlike those of Warhol or the writer of *Last Year in Marienbad*) is to encourage the overflow. *Vertical Features* is only occasionally fey; and it stands against the false rigour of the '70s film culture. Filmically, one might call it surrealist/romantic. But for Greenaway, it is 'magic realism—which is a term that's been used about the novels of Garcia Marquez, Calvino and Borges. It suggests that even in a costume drama like *The Draughtsman's Contract* we are dealing with a work of total fiction. A world in which everything is possible. It's even probable. But it's unlikely'.

Chris Auty

THE FALLS

(February 16)

Director: Peter Greenaway.
Great Britain, 1980.
Script: Peter Greenaway.
Photography: Mike Coles, John Rosenberg, Erica Stevenson, Francine Windham, Tex Ledcote, Bert Walker.
Music: Michael Nyman, Brian Eno, John Hyde, Keith Pendlebury.
Featuring: Peter Westley, Aad Wirtz, Michael Murray, Lorna Poulter, Patricia Carr, Adam Leys, Mary Howard, Sheila Canfield.
Colour. 185 minutes. 16 mm.

The Falls is a long film. It is almost an expression of Greenaway's frustration, I'd



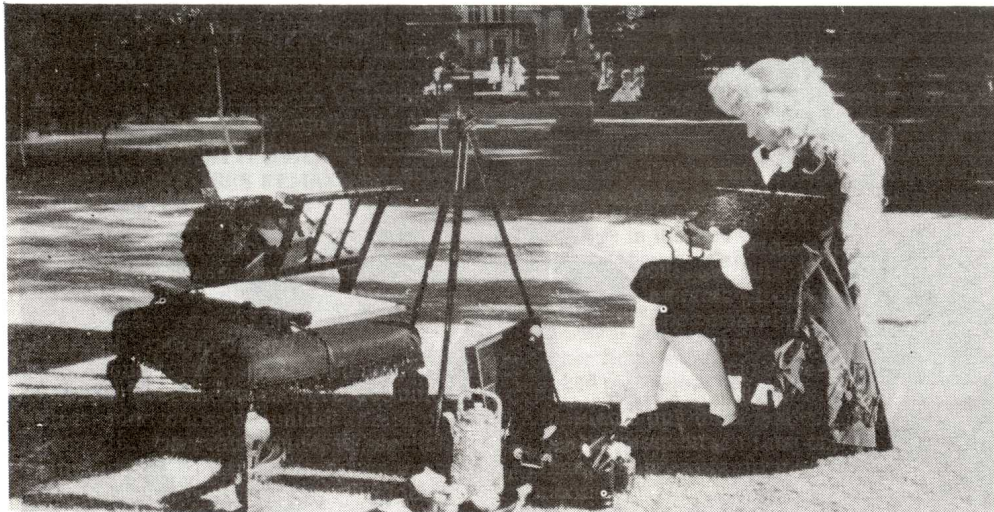
suggest, that his two previous works (*A Walk through H* and *Vertical Features*) had gone nowhere with the public. Who else, one wonders, would try to tell 92 stories, about fictional characters in an implausible world, on film? (And still not using actors on the screen). It was a deliberately antagonistic gesture—although the precedents for it lay in medieval books of lists, and in the work of a Greenaway hero, John Cage: 'In the fifties, Cage made a work called "Indeterminacy", which consisted of ninety stories. I always counted them wrongly and made them ninety-two. Which is something I'm sure Cage himself would quite like. The stories were on record and each one occupied one minute exactly, though some of the stories consisted of eight words and others of three paragraphs. So the stories which consisted of eight words were to be read very, v—ery slo—w—ly. To fill the time. The ones that were three or four paragraphs had to be run terribly, terribly fast. A nice idea. And it seemed to be a way of coping with narrative in cinema—by overloading a film with thousands of bits of narrative, hundreds of events and millions of characters, you were negating narrative'.

The Falls consists of 92 stories—biographies of survivors from a strange apocalypse called the Violent Unknown Event, in the aftermath of which humans began, to mutate into bird forms, and in which there are as many languages as creatures. The 92 entries are taken from the post-VUE directory of survivors, simply a random sample of those whose names begin with the letters 'f a l l'. Simply? Random?

Greenaway himself is very aware of the connotations of a story that begins with The Fall and goes on to a land of Babel where language is in chaos. Not to mention a film which refers constantly to an 'Unknown Event' (if unknown, how exactly can it be spoken of?). Most of all to a Violent Unknown Event—a VUE—a vue—a view. More than anything else he has done, *The Falls* is a schizophrenic Greenaway project, in which game-playing and abstract construction are taken to considerable lengths in opposite directions. In which the immediate humour and pleasure of the images (and Greenaway is an excellent technician of natural beauty on celluloid) are set in a form whose duration will try the patience of anyone but a fan.

Ironically, perhaps unlike the earlier films, *The Falls* will stand the test of time. For its play with repetition and resemblance (using bird names and bird names for places—like Goldhawk Road—to memorable effect), *The Falls* stands in a sidelong relationship to the British generation of academics and undergraduates who 'discovered' Michel Foucault and his highly influential work on cultural perception, *The Order of Things*. Above all, the elegance of its construction of an alternative world will become the subject of future PhD theses—especially since it combines a vision of apocalypse with the follies of bureaucratic and academic classification. If the result is less rich, that may simply be because *The Falls* is four times as long as *A Walk through H* or *Vertical Features Remake*.

Chris Auty



THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT

(February 3-8, 10-15)

Director: Peter Greenaway.

Great Britain, 1982.

Script: Peter Greenaway.

Photography: Curtis Clark.

Music: Michael Nyman.

Leading Players: Anthony Higgins (*Mr. Neville*), Janet Suzman (*Mrs Herbert*), Anne Louise Lambert (*Sarah Talmann*), Neil Cunningham (*Thomas Noyes*), Hugh Fraser (*Louis Talmann*), Dave Hill (*Mr. Herbert*).

Colour. Certificate AA. 108 minutes.

The summer of 1694. Kent. A young and ambitious draughtsman, bored by the aristocratic idiocy of his social superiors, is nonetheless inveigled into spending a fortnight at the country house of an aristocratic host by his bored wife. The purpose? To make twelve drawings of the house in its grounds and so preserve a record of wealth and stability for future generations. The price? That the draughtsman be rewarded by the sexual favours of the mistress of the house while the master is away 'on business'.

Peter Greenaway's film, originally budgeted at £120,000 and produced by the BFI, ended up costing almost £300,000 and becoming a co-production with Channel 4. Since then it has enjoyed unprecedented success with audiences in London, and standing ovations at foreign festivals. It has been sold for distribution in America. And it is Greenaway's first feature to use actors.

The Draughtsman's Contract is something of a phenomenon. But at least one thing aligns it with the director's previous work: when the film was shown at the Edinburgh Film Festival, the audience of arts bureaucrats and film theorists were generally unimpressed. Which seems extraordinary. It is hard to imagine a film whose subject and treatment are so uniquely British, and whose possibilities are so purely cinematic. One can't quite guess what the white costuming, largely outdoor scenes and medium-shot construction will look like when the film is finally shown on TV—but they will *not* look like TV. Greenaway chose 1694 after examining half a dozen possibilities, ranging back from the present day (which he abandoned simply because a story about representation set in 1982 would almost automatically have implied a project set in the world of television or high-class photography). 'This was an ideal time to my mind—Catholicism had been displaced, the new protestant money-making class were making themselves felt. This was also the beginning of indigenous English painting—because most of the painters up to that time had been Flemish or French. And

it was an era of great social change, in which the Whig landowners were to start their vast building programmes. Finally, these were the last years before the formal garden broke open under the impact of landscape gardening . . .

The subject of this elaborately staged historical piece, though, is very much part of the Greenaway whole: the arrogant young draughtsman is a rebel. The aristocratic wife who hires him is a deceiver—at first, we imagine, of her husband; later, we realise, of the draughtsman himself. Both, for ambition and self-interest, are distorting the rules of the game. The landscape itself is under change. The garden, so formally perfect, is about to be re-modelled. But the draughtsman sketches the clues to another story (a story of *real* adultery, real social transgression) into his pictures, and is doomed. The wife, better equipped, manipulates the social dance to ensure her continuing power as the mistress of the dynasty. And the social order rolls on toward its smug, Whig, banking future, in which the ambitious Mr. Talman, revelling in his protestant ascendancy in an English landscape, can teach an A-Z which he knows will no longer be disturbed once the draughtsman is gone.

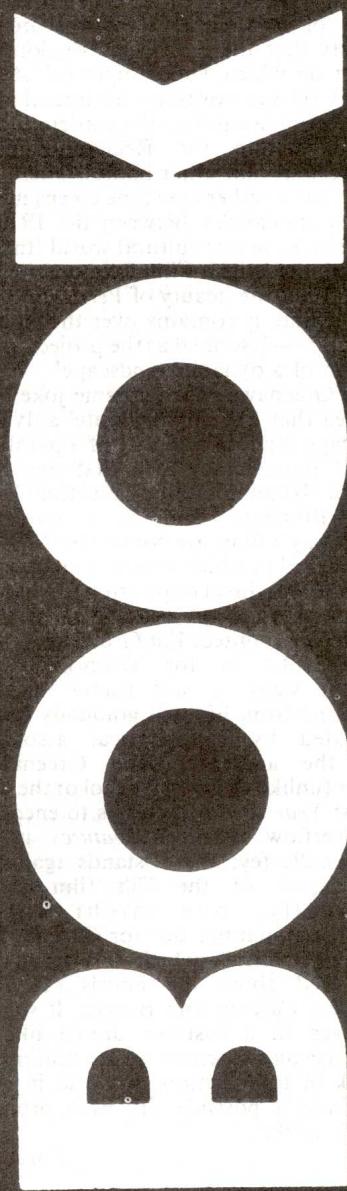
In outline, *The Draughtsman's Contract* re-works an old idea—of the artist as transgressor; as the creature who shows the world its mirror and is shunned (or worse) as a result. The difference is that for all his love of Canaletto and De La Tour, Greenaway has picked on an imitator rather than a painter. The optical device that the draughtsman uses to frame his subjects is a fictional 17th century equivalent of the cross-hairs and frame of the eye-sight in a camera. His failure is not to have painted the warts of his superiors—that was often allowed—but to fail to understand the meanings emerging from the landscape in his gaze: power-broking, infidelity, the succession, consensus and order.

'We originally had a four-hour film—and it was like a large slice of late 17th century life. Including the servants. A consideration of the architecture of the period. The use of plant bulbs as a form of currency. The period's obsession with orange trees. And the original was much . . . stricter—you spent much more time watching people draw. And in retrospect I'm sure we did the right thing, cutting the film down to some kind of commercial length. Otherwise we'd have ended up with a recondite movie full of obscurities'—Greenaway.

The Draughtsman's Contract is hardly a simple story. It is Peter Greenaway's most complex (and probably most rewarding) film so far, replacing the angry fictional polemics of his earlier work with a speculative essay on class and history in the English landscape.

Chris Auty

REVIEW



REVIEW

FOUR ON FOUR. Edited by Angela McRobbie.

Birmingham Film Workshop and West Midlands Arts, 1982. £1.95.

Four on Four is a transcript of four open fora on Channel 4 set up jointly by the Birmingham Film Workshop and West Midlands Arts and held in the autumn of 1981, about a year before C4 went on the air.

Before going on to discuss the contents, it

is worthwhile noting the exemplary cultural functioning of both the Workshop and West Midlands Arts in setting up the fora. On the one hand, here is an operation whose focus is primarily on image production being heavily involved in a discussion-based event—a fine example of the concept of *integrated activity* (of the breaking down of the barriers between the production and the consumption of images) at work. On the other hand, here is a regional arts association taking the initiative and defending an arts agenda for discussion rather than, like too many other RAAs, simply being responsive to demand.

The introduction offers a useful thumbnail sketch of the historical relationship between broadcasting and the state and, thereafter, the four debates follow similar formats: in each case there is a panel, one member of which offers a statement about the topics, with the discussion then opening out to include the other members of the panels and the participants as a whole. As the introduction says: "At a crucial stage in the establishment of Channel Four's 'profile of diversity', these four issues were selected as significant starting points".

The four areas of debate are: the campaign for a Welsh language television service; the employment and representation of women on television; independent film; and news and current affairs.

Rhodri Williams, a founder member of the Welsh Language Society, in his opening statement from the platform, outlined the role of the society in initiating and keeping on the agenda the question of broadcasting in relation to the devolution debate. Underlying the particular insistence on provision for Welsh language speakers is the idea that *all* minority groups in the UK have the right to such provision, a concept—as Williams pointed out—incompatible with the consensualist nature of British broadcasting. The ten year campaign that Williams spells out—including direct action such as the damaging of transmitters and the threat of a prolonged and possibly fatal hunger strike by Gwynfor Evans—clearly requires to be studied by other groups in the UK seeking to achieve aims analogous to the Welsh. There was a sense, however, in which the experience outlined by Williams was too specific for the participants at the forum, who seemed to be interested in more general questions such as the implications of Channel 4 for British society as a whole, the analogy with other minority groups in British society and the general question of accountability.

One of these questions was taken up more specifically in the second forum about women in and on television. Helen Baehr offered an opening statement about the formation (in 1979) and the operation of the Women's Broadcasting and Film Lobby. Like the previous opening statement, Helen Baehr's offers a useful historical perspective on its own subject matter and some indication of the groups and individuals lobbied and some of the problems posed by the Lobby. Among the more interesting of these—and such problems are characteristic of any political movement which unites diverse tendencies—was the split between the women working in mainstream television who were reasonably content with the processes of representation found there and those women from independent production backgrounds who thought the basic practices of representation needed changing. As Helen Baehr said in her introduction: "... there is a tremendous difference between trying to encourage more women to become media professionals, which I would argue is what the Lobby is doing, and creating feminist alternatives to

ways of working, to ways of producing programmes, to the whole way in which television is actually situated in our culture".

This connected with the more interesting subsequent exchanges—many of which were simply clarifications of the introduction—such as the one about whether a specifically feminist humour was possible.

The third forum was about the relationship between independent film and Channel 4 and was introduced by Alan Fountain, who had himself come out of an independent film-making background and had recently been appointed as Commissioning Editor for that area in Channel 4. He gave a rundown of the organisation of the new Channel and how its personnel relate to each other's areas of concern before going on to stress the importance of the independent workshops, both as autonomous cultural forces and as suppliers for C4's needs, and to point to the problem of control, specifically whether C4 can operate under a rather different set of rules with regard to the IBA.

The discussion opened on the key question of the attitude of the unions, specifically ACTT, to independent work, in which it was revealed that ACTT has been most flexible in helping to devise a range of agreements and codes of practice which will allow a wide diversity of kinds of production to be transmitted. There were some exchanges about C4's plans with regard to news coverage and programmes about the cinema and the likelihood of its becoming a ghetto for 'culture' before the discussion homed in, as it recurrently did, on issues of the Channel's accountability. Reference was made to the proposal made by the Independent Film Makers' Association for a constitutional and economic guarantee for innovative and independent work, the idea of a Foundation built into the C4 structure which has broad Labour Party support but in the end did not succeed in getting off the ground. There was general agreement that C4's commitment to independent and innovative work would be tenuous unless formalised within the structure of C4.

The final forum was on Current Affairs and News and was introduced by Stuart Hood, who restated, against the prevailing ideology within broadcasting, that news is an artefact made by people who work in news production and is saturated with ideologies dominant in the society. He was pessimistic that C4 would be permitted radically to alter this. Much of the early discussion focused on the extent to which professionalism was an important element in news production before a representative of the IBA made a crucial reference to the Act of Parliament which defines the role of the IBA and pointed out that the Act does not require broadcasters to be *absolutely* impartial but to display 'due impartiality'. This was probably the first time that this important distinction had been noted. After clarification of the question of 'dominant ideology', the discussion closed on the intriguing possibility that the needs of those whose view of the world is denied access to television might be better served by *fictional* forms rather than *factual* ones.

The overall worth of *Four on Four* is to alert readers to the *politics* which have gone into C4's realisation and to the need to continue a politics to safeguard the advances it has made.

Colin McArthur

KUBRICK: INSIDE A FILM ARTIST'S MAZE by Thomas Allen Nelson.
Indiana University Press, 1982. £5.95.

Attempting to penetrate Stanley Kubrick's

fascinating cinematic maze, Thomas Allen Nelson has got completely lost in it. There is the odd fascinating detail to be discovered but no sense of overall direction. A case in point would be Nelson's reading of *The Shining*. It exhaustively (and exhaustingly) pursues issues such as numerology and even Navajo sand painting, but fails to discuss in any detail more central concerns such as the film as self-portrait, as Kubrick's reflections on the cinema, or the film's relation both to the American Gothic literary tradition and to the modern Hollywood horror film. The analysis is a classic instance of an inability to see the wood for the trees. In the context of such high-powered, turgid American film scholarship, this generally means that the footnotes are much more fun than the actual text.

The introduction fails to provide an explanatory framework for the criticism. Thus Nelson's particular line on Kubrick seems marginal and obscurely defined. His expression for his approach is "the aesthetics of contingency", a formula which never seems to blossom into sense. Overall the author seems torn between offering a close reading of the films or half-digested theoretical ideas, so that he never commits himself fully either to using Kubrick's films to interrogate critical theory or deploying critical theory to illuminate Kubrick's films.

The readings of the individual films are also disappointing. *Day of the Fight* and *Spartacus* are passed over with indecent haste. The glum expositions of *Lolita* and *Dr Strangelove* (do we really need yet another listing of this film's sexual imagery?) are devoid of humour and make heavy weather of Kubrick's impish irony. The chapter on *Barry Lyndon* is flawed by assertions that are either unsupported (eg., "Barry is a character with moral substance") or highly dubious (eg., "the narrator's comments become increasingly sympathetic"). Throughout, he never seems to grasp Kubrick's complex sardonic tone, and the critical writing tends to bury the works in a torrent of fussy feverishness, like an out-of-control Raymond Durnat, but without Durnat's wit, flair, insight and genuine eclecticism. Nelson's verbosity seems fated to conceal and confuse rather than enlighten and expand. His discussions of Kubrick's use of music, for example, seem more a dutiful attempt at comprehensiveness than a convincing display of knowledge. These contain an awkward, irrelevant footnote on Rozsa, mistakes about the composer of *Lolita* and the particular use of Beethoven in *A Clockwork Orange*, and a general vagueness on Kubrick's extraordinary use of the classics in his two most recent films.

There are useful sections on the influence of Pudovkin's ideas on Kubrick and on the implications of the difference between the literary originals and the films' adaptations of them. An intriguing comparison between Kubrick and Buñuel could have been developed more fully, but the familiar grouping of Kubrick with Orson Welles fails because the former is crudely elevated by a cheap denigration of the latter. R. P. Kolker's similar section in *A Cinema of Loneliness* is infinitely better argued. More rewarding is the unexpected paralleling of the ending of *A Clockwork Orange* and the Ascot scene of *My Fair Lady*, which does illuminate some themes common to them both, such as language, misogyny, social conditioning and the Pygmalion myth. Overall the major Kubrick trademarks are dutifully catalogued: classicism, fate, narration, the circumlocutions of language, the clash between a claustrophobic sense of time and an infinite sense of space. If the author had used such categories as a way of reading across the films rather than dealing

with them individually, much repetition might have been avoided.

Basically, the quality of writing and insight is way below that of Alexander Walker's rival work and will, I suspect, be doubly eclipsed by Michel Ciment's forthcoming opus on Kubrick, which looks outstanding. Indeed, some recent short pieces on the director, such as Adrian Turner's in *The Movie* and Richard Combs's in the Arts Lab's own (should one insist?) indispensable magazine, open up more interesting avenues for the Kubrick scholar than this, for they convey an infectious sense of commitment and critical engagement. For all the life shown here, Thomas Allen Nelson could be a pseudonym for HAL, the computer of *2001*. The book is the kind of performance one would expect from HAL: all data, no heart. It doesn't even sing "Daisy".

Neil Sinyard

CINEMAS OF THE BLACK COUNTRY by Ned Williams.
Uralia Press, 1982. £12.

Ned Williams may have overstated his claim in his introduction to *Cinemas of the Black Country*, that the Black Country is a microcosm of the world. It is too inbred for that. But until recent years it had a rich cinematic seam to accompany the coal seam which gave the region its name.

Like an industrial archaeologist, Mr. Williams, who came to the area from London in 1962, has dug deep and produced a book (hardback and paperback, published by his own Uralia Press, 23 Westland Road, Wolverhampton), which is a social history, a documentary record, a reference guide and an invaluable appreciation of cinema-going in the region from the turn of the century.

His concern is not so much with films exhibited—though these are mentioned to pinpoint periods and turning points—but with the architectural designs, the 'feeling' of cinemas, from picture palaces to flea-pits, within the communities they served.

His research over two years has been prodigious. There were no central records, no local history papers to provide the raw material. His self-appointed task was to trace proprietors, managers, usherettes, patrons with fond memories, projectionists.

Acknowledging that the cinema is the marriage of technology and magic, Ned Williams has honoured both. His handsomely presented and graphically illustrated book takes each area of the Black Country and examines its cinemas, past and present. First he introduces us to the key figures of the industry in the area, the showmen and exhibitors, the pioneers and developers. Oscar Deutsch, the man behind the Odeon circuit, built his first purpose-built cinema in the Black Country (the Picture House, Brierley Hill) in 1928. By the time he died in 1941, aged 48, he had opened 140 cinemas.

Mr. Williams, a lecturer at Wolverhampton's Wulfrun College, is more than a cinema historian. He is a ghost chaser! Most of his excavations have been on the sites of long-dead cinemas, some now turned into bingo halls, others exhibiting their façades in front of supermarkets. One by one he restores them, in words and photographs, so it is possible, with a little imagination, to appreciate their contemporary significance and the role they played as community pleasure houses, before people became more mobile and had less need for them.

Even while he was writing the book and in the Stourbridge section noting that the town's ABC was one of the few Black Country cinemas remaining, he was

overtaken by events. Stourbridge ABC closed on November 6, and the last patron to leave was Ned Williams, after selling in the foyer copies of his remarkable book. It seemed a fitting conclusion.

Ray Seaton

JEAN RENOIR: THE FRENCH FILMS by Alexander Sesonske.
Harvard Film Studies. 1980. £7.95.

Alexander Sesonske writes warmly and knowledgeably about this period of Renoir's career (1924-1939). He details the growth of the emergent director of the 20s into the mature filmmaker of the 30s. In a space of fifteen years, Renoir made twenty-four films: some are lost, some are rarely seen, some are masterpieces; but thanks to Professor Sesonske's friendship with Renoir, all are recorded within this book. Sesonske's study, however, is not merely of interest to film historians; it is an in-depth critical analysis which provides rich and often new perspectives on Renoir's films.

Renoir's *oeuvre* is examined within the wider context of filmmaking and production in general, and against the background of contemporaneous social and political events. But, more importantly, his work is analysed within the context of film aesthetics and Renoir's own contribution to film as an art form. Sesonske stresses Renoir's new departures at each period of his film production. He describes the director's first period (the end of which coincides with the advent of sound) as one of experimentation, in which there are some memorable shots and series of shots rather than remarkable films. Even within Renoir's early output, however, many glimpses of his mature style emerge. In this respect, *La Petite Marchande d'Allumettes/The Little Match Girl* and *Tire au Flanc* (both 1928) stand out as seminal films, with their more rhythmic editing and greater freedom of camera movement. In particular, it is with *Tire au Flanc* that Renoir's sense of symmetrical structure appears (a structure for which his later films are famous). Furthermore, it is within these two films that, according to Sesonske, we can perceive Renoir's move away from conventional shots. His later films will become anti-cliché not only from the point of view of cinematic language (camerawork, editing, etc.), but also from the point of view of narrative and characterisation.

Sesonske shows great insight into the structural base of Renoir's more mature films and his masterpieces. Although the action of his films may be episodic and loosely structured, it is nonetheless contained within a consciously symmetrical or deliberately asymmetrical form. This fundamental dialectical tension of disorder and order underpins the form of Renoir's films and generates all subsequent parallels and opposites within both the narrative and cinematic language of the films.

It is now well known (among film critics) that Renoir was a highly innovative and daring improviser (take, for example, his use of long shots, static frame, depth of focus, fluid camera movement, looser editing, location shooting, natural sounds, to name but a few). It is also accepted that he was a precursor of Italian neo-realism and the French New Wave. Sesonske's book rightly details the extent of the debt owed to Renoir's work by these two postwar movements. Had Renoir's films been better known by a wider public in the late 40s and the 50s, then these two movements would have appeared less startling, less radical.

Professor Sesonske's study is informed, intelligent, undogmatic and most comprehensive. He examines Renoir's films from many angles (descriptive, structural,

technical) and moreover informs us of their critical reception at the time of their first projection. He also takes to task present-day critics who he feels have misinterpreted Renoir's *oeuvre*, but he does so generously. His book ends with Renoir's departure to the States. It is to be hoped that Professor Sesonske plans a second volume dealing with the director's American and postwar years.

Susan Hayward

REALLY BAD NEWS by Members of the Glasgow University Media Group.
Writers and Readers. £2.95 paperback.

Really Bad News is the third major publication from the Glasgow Media Group. It is intended to supplement and broaden the analysis provided in the two earlier books, *Bad News* and *More Bad News*.

The pioneering analysis of bias in news coverage provided by the group has long been an important political intervention—adding substance to what many feel as a gut reaction. As the book shows in its quotes from confidential BBC minutes, the group's work has also rattled a few skeletons in the cupboard of the broadcasting establishment. If nothing more the work provides a fillip to debate and further research.

In brief, the book sets out to establish a consistent bias in television's coverage of news, a bias which is set against the trades union and labour movement. Transcripts of sections of the news, details of shots and the frequency of relevant references are commandeered as evidence. This is an approach towards what might be described as a 'scientific' analysis and it will certainly jolt us into re-evaluating news programmes.

At several levels the book provides a more populist intervention than has previously been the case for the Glasgow group. First, it is cheaper than their earlier publications; second, they have switched from R.K.P. as publishers to Readers and Writers, and are thereby keying into a different set of constituencies; and third, as a supplement to the analysis, they argue certain minimum demands and suggested courses of action. This less academic approach is important and welcome.

Despite this, serious limitations remain. By concentrating on existing news, those areas unreported are not analysed. While in the more programmatic, latter sections reference is made to the representation of women and blacks, the substantive content does not cover these areas and therefore is not capable of analysing the different problems they pose: not ones of bias so much as frequent invisibility, or a view framed by the existing structures and ideology of news coverage.

One might take issue with their underlying assumption, which seems to be that it is possible (given the existing structure of society) to represent in a balanced way the plurality of perspectives and ideas that people hold. An alternative argument, which appears in Stuart Hood's book *On Television*, is to adopt a more deterministic position and hold that, in the final instance, changes in institutions like TV will only occur once society has fundamentally changed its ways.

For all this, the book is accessible, well-researched and provides a valuable means of reassessing the news coverage which we view and hear daily, and which has such an important role in shaping our understanding of the world.

Rob Burkitt

LATE NIGHT AND MATINEE FILMS

DR. STRANGELOVE

(Jan. 12, 14, 15)

The quintessential filmic diagnosis of 60s nuclear paranoia, *Dr. Strangelove* makes sparse concessions to comfortable viewing. The Machiavellian statement on self-righteous societies (with the concomitant prejudices and xenophobia) is acquitted with biting acuity and zeal. A disquieting vision of the probable nemesis of humanity in a technological age, Kubrick's film abounds with memorable images, not least the infamous juxtaposition of a billowing mushroom cloud against Vera Lynn's smooth and consoling rendition of "We'll Meet Again". Peter Sellers' multiplicity of roles, ranging from gentle caricature to unrestrained goonery, is a brilliant key in an exquisitely cast and directed movie that lends itself to repeated viewings. (Dir.: Stanley Kubrick, G.B., 1963. With: Peter Sellers, George C. Scott, Sterling Hayden, Keenan Wynn, Slim Pickens. Black and White. Cert. A. 94 mins.)

1941

(Jan. 19, 21, 22)

Notwithstanding the strictures of U. S. critics, who dismissed *1941* as the victim of excess, Steven Spielberg's comedy of errors stands as a prime exemplar of the genre. Weaving numerous subplots around the hysteria caused by a would-be Japanese submarine attack on Los Angeles just after Pearl Harbour, the director of *ET* and *Jaws* unhinges a scenario of total, unbridled lunacy that seems predicated on a passion for cinematic bedlam. Spielberg places no importance on considerations such as credibility and logic, preferring to affect visceral rather than cerebral sensibilities with his breathtaking array of inventive set-pieces. Complemented with great éclat by John Williams' score and the maniacal department of Belushi, Ackroyd and Mifune, *1941* makes for excellent all-round entertainment. (Dir.: Steven Spielberg, U.S.A., 1979. With: Dan Ackroyd, Ned Beatty, John Belushi, Lorraine Gary. Colour/Scope. 118 mins.)

NATIONAL LAMPOON'S ANIMAL HOUSE

(Jan. 26, 28, 29)

A *mélange* of scabrous humour and witty, sharply satirical observations that is not entirely without nutritional value. National Lampoon's nostalgic anti-establishment high-jinks—elevated to cult status by dint of the porcine rancour of the late John Belushi—suffers from a recondite humour and in-joke knowingness that may serve to distance viewers not versed in American college folklore. The irreverent ribaldry is liberally seasoned with a bizarre assortment of well-differentiated personae (a case of caricature rather than characterisation), with John Landis orchestrating the monumental craziness and demonstrating an efficacy of style that was to be developed to more pleasing effect in *The Blues Brothers* and *An American Werewolf in London*. (Dir.: John Landis. U.S.A., 1977. With: John Belushi, Tim Matheson, John Vernon, Karen Allen. Colour. Cert. AA. 109 mins.)

SHOOT THE MOON

(Feb. 2, 4, 5)

This is, arguably, Alan Parker's most mature and aesthetically satisfying film to date. His pungent portrayal of conjugal dissolution is observed with refreshing candour, carefully avoiding the lachrymose sentimentality and speciously manufactured pathos that sullied *Kramer vs Kramer*. Albert Finney and Diane Keaton are utilized to superb advantage as the estranged couple who become aware of the self-deceptions and hypocrites that underlie their relationship. Parker's courageous and absorbing production, whilst never attempting to elucidate profound truths concerning the marital state, is nevertheless an intense and piquant behavioural study that

engages the intellect as well as the emotions. (Dir.: Alan Parker. U.S.A., 1982. With: Albert Finney, Diane Keaton, Karen Allen, Peter Weller. Colour. Cert. AA. 123 mins.)

PENNIES FROM HEAVEN

(Feb. 9, 11, 12)

Pennies from Heaven is concerned with the activities of Arthur Parker (Steve Martin), a sheet-music salesman who is frustrated by the combination of a lively imagination and a rustic, frigid wife. He turns his attentions to a small-town schoolteacher (Bernadette Peters), eventually to suffer the dramatic ramifications of his lustful longings. Transposed to a thirties Chicago setting, Dennis Potter's portmanteau musical extravaganza makes a well-fashioned transition to celluloid. A creditable and stylistically sophisticated effort by director Herbert Ross that synthesises vibrant fantasy with the grim realities of bread-line subsistence, cannily re-creating the epicidal ethos of the American Depression and the musical flavour of a Busby Berkeley spectacular. (Dir.: Herbert Ross. U.S.A., 1981. With: Steve Martin, Bernadette Peters, Christopher Walken, Jessica Harper. Colour. Cert. AA. 108 mins.)

MONTEREY POP

(Feb. 16, 18, 19)

D. A. Pennebaker's record of the 1967 International Pop Festival at Monterey remains one of the best rock documentaries. As one would expect of a leading American exponent of *cinéma vérité*, Pennebaker's eschews voice-over commentary. His cameras concentrate on the performers, whose acts are punctuated by shots of the vast and appreciative audience. This being the heyday of flower power, it's no surprise that the latter tend to focus more on the 'beautiful people' than Hells Angels. But the on-stage performers provide an authentic and intriguing reflection of the cultural mix of the period. On the one hand there are songs about love and peace from The Mamas and the Papas; at the other extreme the violent pyrotechnics of The Who and, more interestingly, the pain and frustration expressed in the remarkable performances of Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix. Musically speaking, though, the highlight of the film is a stunning raga by Ravi Shankar. (Dir.: D. A. Pennebaker. U.S.A., 1968. With: Janis Joplin, The Mamas and the Papas, Canned Heat, Jefferson Airplane. Colour. Stereo sound. Cert. A. 79 mins.) Supporting short: ECHOES (22 mins.)

LA CAGE AUX FOLLES (Birds of a Feather)

(Feb. 23, 25-27)

Edouard Molinaro's phenomenally successful film version of Jean Poiret's French farce. Michel Serrault and Ugo Tognazzi are excellent as, respectively, a personable female impersonator and his insecure male lover, both of whom get caught up in marital knavery. These accomplished players ensure that their characterisations transcend stereotyped gay mincing but still maintain an air of ebullient theatricality. Director Molinaro, whose previous credits include that memorable black comedy *L'Emmerdeur*, gets the film off to a promising start with a series of inventive scenes which play with notions of straight and gay behaviour. Unfortunately, though, bathetic farce soon takes over as every scene is played for easy laughs. *La Cage aux Folles* is undeniably funny, but it is also terribly old-fashioned in the worst sense. (Dir.: Edouard Molinaro. France/Italy, 1978. With: Michel Serrault, Ugo Tognazzi, Michel Galabru, Claire Maurier. Colour. Subtitled. Cert. AA. 91 mins.)

CHRISTIANE F.

(Mar. 2, 4, 5)

Based on the confessions of several Berlin teenagers, Ulrich Edel's *Christiane F.* concentrates on the gradual degradation and turpitude of one 13-year old heroin addict and prostitute. Adopting a sombre, semi-documentary style, Edel chronicles the miring of viridity: from tentative emulation of an addicted boyfriend (acknowledging familial insouciance), through to a heart-rending observation of gauche solicitations and vertiginous narcosis. The film uncompromisingly catalogues an individual crisis in harrowing detail, with the camera embracing its protagonist's milieu with the close-up fetishism of a nature study. To its credit, however, the film manages to be neither sensationalist nor judgmental. (Dir.: Ulrich Edel. West Germany,

1981. With: Natja Brunckhorst, Thomas Haustein, Jens Kuphal. Colour. Subtitled. Cert. X. 131 mins.)

THE GIRL CAN'T HELP IT

(Mar. 9, 11-13)

A classic rock 'n' roll musical that epitomizes the prescient modernism of caustic director Frank Tashlin. Taking its narrative cue from George Cukor's *Born Yesterday* (out-of-work press agent helps fashion gangster's moll into a Movie Star), Tashlin posits a self-referential and idiosyncratic image of modish culture. The voluptuous Jayne Mansfield, playing the droll and urbane protégée, is deployed to swing effect, invariably as the guileless brunt of verbal puns and plethora of visual *double entendres* (Mansfield grasping two milk bottles to her bosom, for example). The exorbitant humour is, however, overshadowed by a showcase of vintage cameos from Gene Vincent, Fats Domino, and Eddie Cochran—framed in Cinemascope and De Luxe colour for the delectation of the rock 'n' roll connoisseur. (Dir.: Frank Tashlin. U.S.A., 1956. With: Jayne Mansfield, Edmund O'Brien, Eddie Cochran. Colour. Cert. U. 99 mins.)

GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES

(Mar. 9, 11-13)

Generally recognised as being a seminal influence in the legend of Marilyn Monroe, Howard Hawks' film of Anita Loos' Broadway hit also offered the first intimations of Monroe's gift for light comedy. Sagaciously retaining the familiar storyline of the original show, Hawks' treatment plasters the simple framework with a wealth of rich musical detail but concentrates on the archetypal Dumb Blonde who discovers, and euphonicly declares, that 'Diamonds Are a Girls Best Friend'. Jane Russell's sentient performance as the wise-cracking sidekick provided her with the best notices of her career and rounded off a movie that leans heavily on a conglomeration of rollicking, madcap clowning and brash musical exaggeration. (Dir.: Howard Hawks. U.S.A., 1953. With: Marilyn Monroe, Jane Russell, Charles Coburn. Colour. Cert. U. 91 mins.)

THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE

(Mar. 16, 18, 19)

Teamed again with his favourite actor, Jack Nicholson, director Bob Rafelson turns aside from the complexities of contemporary alienation (*Five Easy Pieces*, *The King of Marvin Gardens*) to provide a downbeat yet richly textured new adaptation of James Cain's novel. Part of the interest of the film is that, unlike Tay Garnett's celebrated 1946 version, it can afford to be honest about the element of sexual obsession that binds Cain's murderous protagonists. But the chief merit of Rafelson's film has more to do with its poignant portrayal of the developing yet ultimately doomed relationship between the Depression drifter and the ambitious but frustrated beauty who is trapped in a hopeless marriage. Rafelson and his scriptwriter (the American playwright, David Mamet) discover the seeds of tragedy as well as elements of the American Dream in the story of Frank and Cora. (Dir.: Bob Rafelson. U.S.A., 1981. With: Jack Nicholson, Jessica Lange, John Colicos. Colour. Cert. X. 121 mins.)

MOMMIE DEAREST

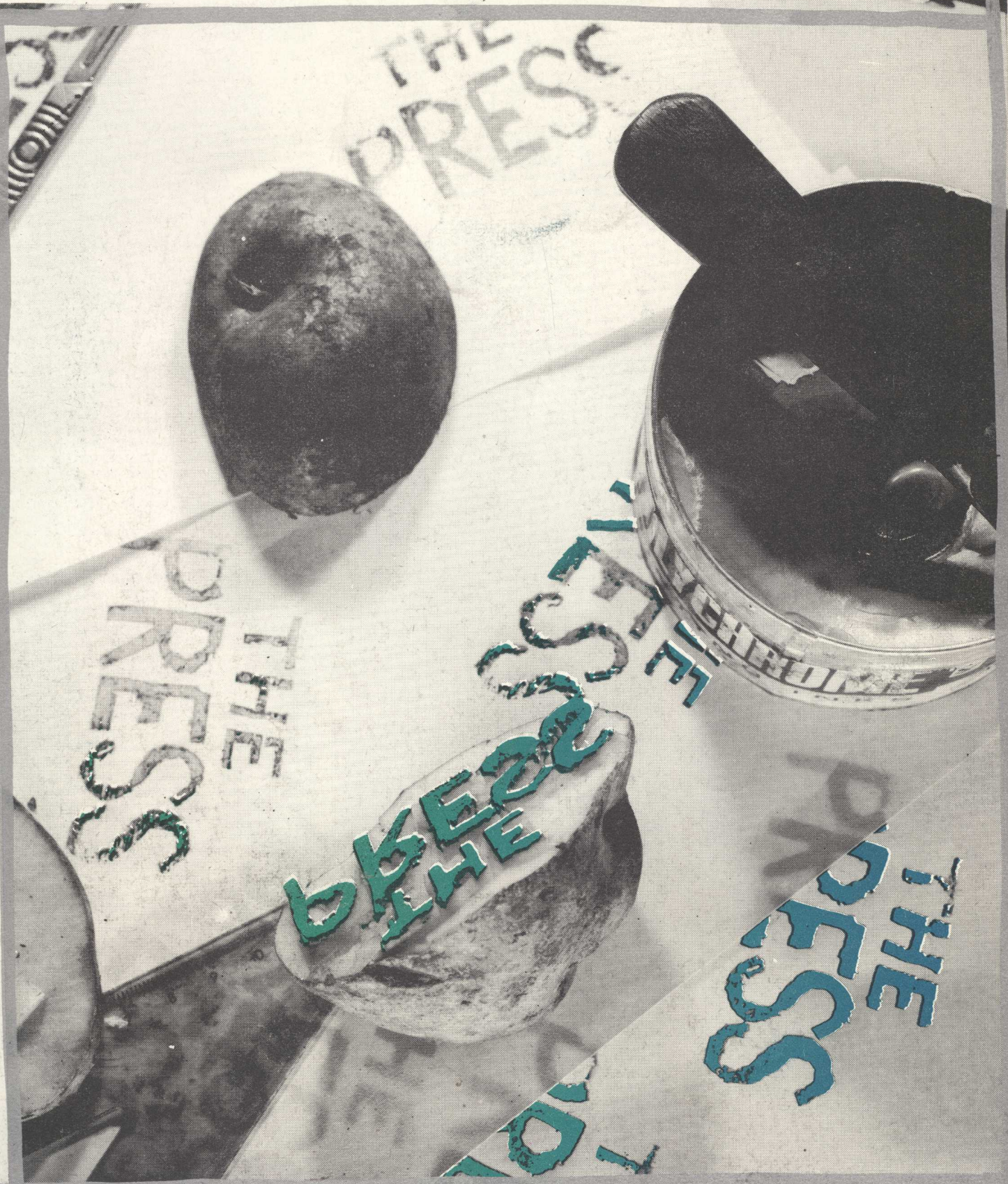
(Mar. 30; April 1, 2)

Frank Perry's biography of Joan Crawford almost succeeds in circumventing the hagiographic problems inherent in bringing to the screen the life of Hollywood's most durable star. By attenuating the obviously tendentious source book by daughter Christina (an angry indictment of her mother's monomania, truculence and affectation), and by refusing at any time to disparage, glorify or sentimentalise, Perry achieves a fairly balanced portrait. In the title role, Faye Dunaway artfully and effectively depicts the adamantine Crawford spirit, the effects she brings off being more the result of consummate acting ability than skilful make-up. (Dir.: Frank Perry. U.S.A., 1981. With: Faye Dunaway, Diana Scarwid, Steve Forrest, Howard de Silva. Colour. Cert. AA. 129 mins.)

NB: *The Long Good Friday* is also showing on late night and matinee performances during the period covered by this programme. Notes on this film can be found elsewhere in the booklet.

Notes written by Jerzy S. Sliwa.

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